

**The Effectiveness of the Office for Standards in Education
(OFSTED) Inspection Process in England as an Accountability
Mechanism and its Influence upon Whole School Improvement in
English Maintained Schools**



Barbara J Vann MA

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

University of Tasmania April 2005

School of Education

Acknowledgement

I thank my supervisors, Professors Bill Mulford and Reynold Macpherson, and mentors for all their hard work and persistence in supporting me in the completion of this thesis. I thank Dr Macpherson in particular for having faith in my ability.

I thank my three sons for their love.

I dedicate this thesis to Lord James Callaghan who died in April 2005.

Declaration:

I certify that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institute, college or university, and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barbara Jane Vann', followed by a horizontal line.

Barbara Jane Vann

Copyright:

©2005 Barbara Jane Vann. This thesis may be made available for loan and limited copying in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

Abstract

The research questions addressed in this thesis are: How effective is the OFSTED process as an accountability mechanism? And, does whole school inspection lead to school improvement?

The literature of school effectiveness and school improvement is reviewed followed by an outline of the evidence of school improvement offered by OFSTED from 1996 as a context for the inspection outcomes and subsequent improvement or not, in four case study schools. An attempt is made to link the OFSTED mantra of “Improvement through Inspection” to the inspection process as experienced by the schools in the study. In addition, a brief context is provided that outlines the systemic change processes and accountability processes that were prevalent in the education systems of the largely English-speaking world at the time of OFSTED’s inception and more recently. A comparison is made between OFSTED and the international examples before detailing the research on OFSTED’s effectiveness and the government response.

The ethnographic methodology used is justified, aware of the potential difficulties attached where the researcher is also the headteacher of one of the four case study schools.

Results from the case studies allow discussion of the differences in approach from the headteachers to the inspection process and the possible consequences of their actions. Other issues arising from the case studies include: the relevance of the timing

of the inspections within the evolution of the OFSTED process; the situation of the schools at the time of their inspections; the relationships between stakeholders within the schools, particularly the apparent marginalisation of the governors from the process; the communities' perceptions of the schools and the personal disposition of the headteachers towards the OFSTED process. Inconsistencies in the OFSTED process as experienced by the study schools were found to include the lack of credibility given to the OFSTED process by some teachers and senior staff in the schools and the manner in which the schools acknowledged the validity of the inspection judgements.

The thesis concludes by using the research evidence from this study to pose tentative conclusions about how effective the OFSTED inspection is as an accountability process and whether whole school inspection leads to school improvement. It reviews the constraints and limitations of the evidence and indicates areas for further research.

Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	1
• Introduction and purpose of the study	1
• The research questions	4
• Limitations of the study	6
• Definition of terms	8
• Summary	9
• Chapter outline	9
 Chapter 2 Literature Review - School effectiveness, school improvement and the Office for Standards in Education	13
• Introduction	13
• Defining and tracking the development of school effectiveness and school improvement	14
• How do schools improve?	23
• School effectiveness/improvement and inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)	27
• The role of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)	29
• Evidence of school improvement	35
• School improvement linked to inspection Processes	44
• Action planning	49
• Summary	52
 Chapter 3 The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)	54
• Introduction	54
• Context	55
• Definition of accountability	58
• Accountability across the world	68
• New Zealand	66
• USA: Kentucky	69
• Scotland	73
• Australia: New South Wales	76
• England: the development of OFSTED	78
• Research on OFSTED's effectiveness	91
• Conclusion	93
 Chapter 4 Methodology	95
• Introduction	95
• A qualitative ethnographic and subjectivist approach	97
• Developing case studies	101
• Interview	102
• Participant observation and documentary analysis	104
• Ethical considerations and dilemmas as potential sources of bias	106
• Personal dynamics	109

• Political	119
• Data collection	120
• Data treatment	124
• Reliability and validity	125
• Reflections and summary	128
 Chapter 5 Case Study: School A	 133
• Introduction	134
• The school	136
• Notification of inspection	138
• Pre-inspection	141
• Confirmation	144
• Preparation	149
• Initial visit	151
• Perceptions of the inspection: daily log	160
➤ Day one	160
➤ Day two	163
➤ Day three	168
➤ Day four	172
➤ Day five	174
➤ Feedback: oral feedback (2), to the head and deputy	174
➤ Feedback: oral feedback (3), to the Governors	178
➤ Between the oral feedback and the draft report	178
• The draft report	182
• Final report	184
• Action planning	185
• Summary and conclusions	204
 Chapter 6 Case Studies of Schools A (second inspection), B (two inspections), C, and D	 207
• Introduction	207
• School A, second inspection, 1998	207
• School B, inspected in 1995 & 1998	214
• School C, inspected 1996	221
• School D, inspected 1995	228
• Decisions made by school A (1995), school B (1995, 1998) and school C (1996) in the immediate post inspection period	232
• Summary and conclusions	236
 Chapter 7 Differences in Inspection and their Consequences	 238
• Introduction	238
• Personal disposition of the headteachers towards the OFSTED inspection.	239
• Behaviour of the headteachers	244
• Timing of the inspections within the evolution of the OFSTED process	249
• The situation of the schools at the time of their inspections	251

• The relationships between stakeholders within the schools and the apparent marginalisation of the governors	253
• The communities' perceptions of the schools	257
• The inconsistencies in the OFSTED process as experienced by the case study schools	259
• Improvement through inspection	264
• Action planning	268
• Summary and conclusions	275
• Summary	275
• Conclusion	277
 Chapter 8 Summary of findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further study	 279
• Introduction	279
• Summary: Method	280
• Summary: Findings	283
• Effectiveness as an accountability mechanism	283
• Period of notice of inspection	285
• Preparation for inspection: documentation, staff and governors	286
• Contact from the registered inspector and pre-inspection processes	288
• Relationship of the Registered Inspector with staff and governors	289
• Inspection	290
• Reports	292
• Action planning	294
• Conclusions	295
• Implications	296
• Recommendations for further study	300
 References	 301

List of Tables

Table 1	Characteristics of Effective Schools	Page 17 Ch2
Table 2	Internal conditions necessary for School Improvement	Page 25 Ch2
Table 3	OFSTED, Improving areas and areas warranting attention.	Page 31 Ch2
Table 4	Percentage of less than satisfactory lessons seen by OFSTED in 1993/4 and 1997/8	Page 35 Ch2
Table 5	Measure of schools improvement in the annual report of HMCI Mike Tomlinson 2001	Page 42 Ch2
Table 6	Changes in inspection since 1993	Page 47 Ch2
Table 7	The Education Reform Act and accountability	Page 79 Ch3
Table 8	The Education (Schools) Act (1992) and accountability issues	Page 81 Ch3
Table 9	Framework for Continuous Improvement	Page 85 Ch3
Table 10	Characteristics of Qualitative Case Studies	Page 102 Ch4
Table 11	Participating schools and respondents	Page 117 Ch4
Table 12	Summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the methodologies chosen for this study	Page 131 Ch4

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter will describe the purpose and significance of this study for the researcher and for the research community, pose the research questions, outline some limitations of the work and define terms that are used. It will conclude with an outline of each chapter.

Introduction and purpose of the study

As a practitioner, the researcher took the view that she could simultaneously investigate the two research questions (see below), improve her own leadership services to her school, and improve her knowledge by undertaking this reflective study. This thesis develops work described in an earlier study (Vann, 1994) offered at Masters Level. The experiences described in the earlier dissertation were of the early years of headship in a school which would have been described as 'failing' had the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspected the school between 1990 and 1994. The work was a reflection of the way that the author, as headteacher, learned from her many mistakes in the early stages of her headship. It documented the way that the school culture and ethos of the school changed so that it began to focus upon teaching and learning and was able to have pride in its achievements. In this context the beginning of the OFSTED inspection process was anticipated enthusiastically, it offered the researcher an opportunity for triangulation of her work and achievements and an opportunity for advice about how the school should continue to develop.

In terms of accountability, the earlier work had described and analysed the tension between having to maintain a very public profile for the school where Local Management and open enrolment were driving forces, coupled with the impending publication of examination results (Education Act, 1988; Education Reform Act, 1993). For the headteacher/researcher the issues of accountability in 1990-1994 revolved around the need to establish and maintain a positive profile in the community whilst addressing the major underperformance of the school in terms of teaching and learning. This tension was epitomised by an OFSTED official when she spoke of 'a private right to learn and a public right to know' (Agambar, 1999).

This longitudinal study is seen as a natural extension of the earlier work in that the researcher wanted to improve her services as headteacher to her school by working with the inspection process and learning from it. Her belief was that through improving her own services, she could lead the school into further whole school improvement, consolidating and reflecting upon what had been achieved and the next steps that should be taken.

The second motivating factor for the author of this study was that much was being written at the time and subsequently describing what actions should be taken by a headteacher to reach a successful conclusion in inspection. Advice from professional associations and educational consultants was burgeoning but little was known about the process from the perspective of a headteacher. There were no examples found, and none found since, of research undertaken by a headteacher about the process of

inspection as it affected their own school or its affects upon school improvement in the longer term.

The emergence of the theme of lack of consistency in the process by the OFSTED inspection teams was an unintended outcome of the study.

The significance of this study is that it has been undertaken by a practitioner fully immersed in the work of headship who was able to triangulate her experience with expectations and advice offered by central government and professionals outside her institution. Additionally, she was in a privileged position to question other headteachers and receive, in the main, honest and open responses.

Of additional significance is that this study was longitudinal, evidence was collected over a period of four years. Two of the case study schools were inspected twice in that period which gave an opportunity for comparison of the way that the different OFSTED teams worked but also for comparison of the inspection outcomes in the two schools concerned.

To summarise, the purpose of the study was to: improve the author's services to the school as headteacher; improve her headship skills; reflect upon the next steps towards school improvement in her own institution and to investigate whether OFSTED inspection did act as an accountability mechanism in the government's terms, coincidentally capable of driving school improvement nationally in schools.

The research questions

The research questions addressed in this study are:

- How effective is the OFSTED process as an accountability mechanism?
- Does whole school inspection lead to school improvement?

The OFSTED inspection process was but one of the mechanisms of accountability introduced by the Conservative government under the Premierships of Margaret Thatcher and John Major between 1987 and 1993 and it arrived at rather a late stage in the raft of changes that were introduced through the series of Education Acts of Parliament during that time. The school curriculum, devolved responsibility for finance (including staffing and buildings maintenance), admissions policies, parental choice of school, governance, attendance and Special Educational Needs (SEN) for example, all became, progressively, the direct responsibility of maintained schools in England and Wales from 1987 onwards. Students and pupils became units of financial worth, Age Weighted Pupil Units, which provided the base budget for schools. Successful schools were encouraged to leave the Local Education Authority, becoming Grant Maintained and funded directly from central government. In the government's view schools were to assume responsibility for their activities. Schools also assumed the blame when things were wrong.

The government intention was to raise standards of achievement, to improve school outcomes for pupils and students and to ensure that value for money was being achieved (see Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis). Schools which were not succeeding

were expected to close in favour of more successful schools. The 'great themes' of educational change according to John Major (DFE, 1992) were quality, diversity, parental choice, school autonomy and accountability. Two strands of these 'great themes' were tested to some degree by this research: whether OFSTED was successful as an accountability mechanism and whether schools improved as a result of inspection.

To inform and contextualise the study in its aspects concerning school improvement a comparison of the school improvement and school effectiveness movements follows in Chapter 2. The chapter describes the development of the two strands of research that during the 1990s were seen as almost entirely separate by academics. This view was generally not shared by practitioners. The study demonstrates the use to which the headteacher/researcher applied the research findings from both fields of enquiry.

In Chapter 3 the study offers comparisons of the OFSTED system in England with similar inspection processes in the USA (Kentucky), Scotland, New Zealand and Australia (New South Wales). In every case the inspection processes are external to schools and are imposed by national or state government. The claims from success in the discussion of systemic change linked to school improvement is however very different.

Limitations of the study

The principal limitations of the study are in these areas: the number of case study schools, limited to four; the methodology used; the appropriateness of transferring findings to other situations and the replication of findings either in respect of the process of inspection or in the implications for school improvement as a consequence of inspection.

The study used four schools as Case Study schools though two of them were inspected twice within the period of evidence gathering, from January 1995 to December 1999. The schools chosen to be part of this study were diverse. There was one junior school, for children aged 8 to 11, with approximately 300 pupils on roll. There was an upper school for 14-19 year old students with 1700 on roll and there were two high schools for children aged 11-14 years with between 500 and 600 students each.

All the headteachers were known professionally to the researcher before the study began. This could have been a weakness of the study (see Chapters 4, 6 and 7) but the potential for a lack of objectivity, for example, was negated during the research by rigorous triangulation of the data and of the information gathered.

Further potential weaknesses of the methodology are discussed in depth in Chapter 4, including the potential for bias from the researcher, the predisposition of the researcher and the interviewees, particularly headteachers, the use of a case study approach, political and ethical considerations and the use and treatment of data.

The application of the research findings to other situations is limited by the inability to duplicate the circumstances that pertained at the time that evidence was collected and by the very particular dynamics that existed between the headteachers and their school communities, between the headteachers and their governors and staff and in the political context of the time. This is highlighted by the fact that many actions and decisions made by the headteachers were singular, in response to particular circumstances. They could be used to give indications for future actions by the headteachers or others in response to similar circumstances.

Further limitations to replication of the study exist in that the Framework for Inspection has undergone considerable change both during the course of this research (see Chapter 7) and since the completion of evidence collection. However the implications for school improvement and accountability from the OFSTED process of inspection remain the same.

Definition of terms

The definition of accountability used in this study is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. It is focussed upon the Kogan (1986) definition of normative accountability and the Macpherson (1996) view that accountability should be defined as a principle that serves a purpose. In this respect Macpherson suggests that those who require accountability of others should be themselves accountable. In this study accountability is required of the

schools and, through the electoral process, of government. However there was little evidence in this study of accountability from OFSTED to schools for the quality of the inspection process and the way in which inspections were undertaken.

The word inspection in this study infers 'regular, independent inspection' that is external to both the school and the Local Education Authority (LEA). In the early stages of OFSTED development (1993-96) it was not seen as part of a developmental process for schools but one which gave the school an analysis of what was working and what was not. It was a judgement made at a particular moment in time, a 'snapshot', with no cognisance taken of contextual data (see Chapters 2 and 5) that may have affected the school and the inspection findings. The government and the public wanted a consistent and reliable inspection system that it was supposed would improve standards of achievement and the quality of education in schools. Government and society wanted public reporting of inspection findings and robust advice to ministers was an imperative for government.

School effectiveness and school improvement are defined in Chapter 2. In essence school effectiveness is defined by outcomes measures and school improvement is linked to the creation of a climate for improvement. The latter is much less likely to be simply quantified or evaluated by use of outcome measures. School effectiveness and school improvement are described in Chapter 2 and some of the research underpinning the two ideas is detailed. The chapter notes some of the characteristics of an effective school and describes elements associated with school improvement. The study

challenges the OFSTED mantra of 'Improvement through Inspection' by detailing systematically the inspection process as experienced by the schools in the study. Discussion of whether schools do improve as a result of inspection is replicated in the research literature noted in Chapters 2 and 3. In 1999 it was said by an OFSTED research officer that the mantra would be dropped by OFSTED as 'there is no evidence that improvement follows inspection –absolutely none' (Agambar, 1999). However the expected change of mantra did not happen.

Summary

In summary, this Chapter has outlined the scope of the study. It indicated its purpose and possible significance but also readily admitted to its limitations and possible difficulties in replication of the methodology and outcomes. Terms were briefly defined. It remains to outline the chapters that follow.

Chapter outline

Chapter 1 outlines the study as noted above, posing the research questions and giving some context to the reasons for the study being undertaken. In Chapter 2 the study offers an overview of the continuous debate about the nature of school effectiveness and school improvement which has prevailed for the last twenty years. It describes how debate has centred upon two strands, school effectiveness and school improvement, and a complex web of understandings concerning the way that schools, as organisations devoted to teaching and learning, can improve what they do and the way

that they do it. The theoretical discussion, supported by research, is outlined and set against political imperative about the value for money which schools represent and the perceived need to raise standards in schools. The accountability of schools in both respects is linked in England through the inspection process of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). The development of OFSTED and the inspection process are described.

As introduced and outlined in the first chapter, this study attempts to assess how effective the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) is as an accountability mechanism. Chapter 3 begins with a brief context which outlines the systemic change processes that were prevalent in the education systems of the largely English-speaking world at the time of OFSTED's inception and more recently. It then defines educational accountability and tracks briefly the significant changes that resulted from the pursuance of school level accountability, beginning in the late 1970s in New South Wales (Australia), New Zealand, England, Kentucky (USA) and Scotland through the role of: the Education Review Office of New Zealand; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland; the review activities of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training; and the Kentucky Department for Education School Accountability Index. The role and development of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) in England is described chronologically from 1992 to recent times. A comparison is made between OFSTED and the international examples before detailing the research on OFSTED's effectiveness and the government response.

Chapter 4 outlines and justifies the qualitative ethnographic methodology used, aware of the potential difficulties attached where the researcher is also the headteacher of one of the case study schools. The researcher was committed to discovering and interpreting the 'reality' of OFSTED inspection as experienced by those in schools. Hence the inspection of four schools by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) was investigated by interviewing the headteachers of the schools and by participant observation and interviewing. Data was collected from November 1994 to December 1999. The chapter concludes with reflections on the limits to interpretation.

The following Chapters, 5 and 6, are case studies of the four schools in the study. Chapter 5 is a detailed description of the inspection of school A from early actions by the head in November 1994 through to the end of the 1995/6 school year. The chapter weaves together multiple perspectives of events as they unfolded but is written from the perspective of the researcher as participant observer. The plural interpretations of the OFSTED process reveal the theories of participants held at the time, although there is also evidence that the participants' ideas changed as the process continued. The chapter offers some reflections on the inspection experience. Chapter 6 tracks the first inspections of the other three schools but in less detail than in Chapter 5. During this period two of the case study schools experienced their second inspections which are also detailed.

In Chapter 7 the data collected from the four case study schools is presented. The Chapter discusses the differences in approach from the headteachers to the inspection

process and the possible consequences of their actions. Chapter 7 critically reflects upon the data from Chapters 5 and 6, and discusses briefly the relevance of the timing of the inspections within the evolution of the OFSTED process; the situation of the schools at the time of their inspections; the relationships between stakeholders within the schools, particularly the apparent marginalisation of the governors from the process; the communities' perceptions of the schools and the personal disposition of the headteachers towards the OFSTED process. The chapter highlights: the inconsistencies in the OFSTED process as experienced by the study schools; the lack of credibility given to the OFSTED process by some teachers and senior staff in the schools; and, the manner in which the schools acknowledged the validity of the inspection judgements. The chapter relates the mantra for the Office for Standards in Education, 'Improvement through Inspection' to the evidence from Chapters 5 and 6 to headteacher comments that 'OFSTED didn't tell us anything we didn't already know'.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter 8, the research evidence from this study is used to pose tentative conclusions about how effective the OFSTED inspection process is as an accountability process and whether whole school inspection leads to school improvement. It reviews the constraints and limitations of the evidence and indicates areas for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature review - school effectiveness, school improvement and inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)

Introduction

This chapter begins by describing, briefly, school effectiveness and school improvement and outlines some of the associated research underpinning the two ideas. The chapter describes some of the characteristics of an effective school and details elements associated with school improvement.

The chapter also reviews briefly the evidence of school improvement offered by OFSTED, the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) and Department for Education and Skills (DFES) from 1996 as a context for the inspection outcomes and subsequent improvement or not, in the four case study schools. It attempts to link the OFSTED mantra of “Improvement through Inspection” to the inspection process as experienced by the schools in the study.

Over the last twenty years there has been a continuous and at times very vocal debate about the nature of school effectiveness and school improvement. The debate has centred upon these as two strands of a complex web of understandings concerning the way that schools, as organisations devoted to teaching and learning, can improve what they do and the way that they do it.

The theoretical discussion, supported by research, has become entangled in the political debate about the value for money from the public purse, which schools represent. The Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher, in response to the public anxiety about standards in schools and the cost of the public education service, introduced the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). It was one of a very wide-ranging series of radical and profound changes to the education system in England and Wales, enabled through Acts of Parliament in 1986; 1988; 1992 and 1993.

The major foci of the Legislation were to raise standards. This was to be achieved through the pressure upon schools to be accountable in terms of student outcomes in public examinations and through showing value for money.

Defining and tracking the development of school effectiveness and school improvement

In an effort to define the differences between school effectiveness and school improvement research, Gray and Wilcox (1995 p. 217) drew attention to,

The different methodological orientations of the two groups, with school effectiveness researchers inclining towards the quantitative and school improvement researchers towards the qualitative. The former group have been content to describe the differences between schools whilst the latter

have been concerned to change them ... school effectiveness researchers have almost uniformly based their research frameworks on pupil achievement measures ... whilst school improvement researchers have focused upon various process measures.

It has been said (Harris, 2001, p. 8) that school effectiveness made rapid progress as an area of research because it is closely linked to a 'means-end relationship'. Writers and researchers in the field, (Rutter et al, 1979; Mortimore et al, 1988; Smith and Tomlinson, 1989; Nuttall et al, 1989; Willms, 1992) demonstrated that schools could be more or less effective at raising attainment even where pupils had similar socio-economic backgrounds. It was found that attainment could also be lowered. Differential effectiveness between schools was found across a series of different within-school groupings, for example, gender, ability and ethnic groupings. Barber (1995, p. 2) called the burgeoning interest in school effectiveness and its implications for improving schools, "school effectiveness fever".

In the light of the atmosphere of blame and derision (Ball, 1990) that was prevalent in the early 1990s, the concept of school effectiveness was an attractive notion to local and national politicians, suggesting as it did, that given a prescribed input an effective school could result. It was not however a new idea. Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), the inspection service that existed before OFSTED, outlined in their review of secondary

schools, 1982-1986 (1988, pp. 8-11), what they thought constituted an effective school. Many of the characteristics later defined by school effectiveness researchers (see Table 1) were present.

Research, (Sammons et al, 1995) which indicated what the probable characteristics of effective schools were, (see Table 1) became influential in the thinking of national and local policy-makers. As Barber pointed out, (1996, p. 128),

Now that we know that schools make a difference ... teachers, individually and collectively, [are required] to review what they do and to try to improve it. The research on school effectiveness has thus contributed to a fundamental ... change of climate.

Barber noted that the characteristics of effectiveness once identified allowed schools and individual teachers to establish goals to achieve greater effectiveness. Further he pointed out (1996 p. 131), "For politicians the research has provided convincing evidence on which to base some major policy and spending decisions." This included the continuation and enhancement of OFSTED inspection after the change to a Labour government in 1997. The link of the research into school effectiveness with the OFSTED process is described in greater detail in Table 1.

Table 1 Characteristics of Effective Schools*

Professional Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Firm and purposeful• A participative approach• The leading professional
Shared vision and goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unity of purpose• Consistency of practice• Collegiality and collaboration
A learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An orderly atmosphere• An attractive environment
Concentration on teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximisation of learning time• Academic emphasis• Focus on achievement
Purposeful teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Efficient organisation• Clarity of purpose• Structured lessons• Adaptive practice
High expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High expectations of all• Communicating expectations• Providing intellectual challenge
Positive reinforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear and fair discipline• Feedback
Monitoring progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitoring pupil performance• Evaluating school performance
Pupil rights and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raising pupil self-esteem• Positions of responsibility• Control of work
Home/school partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parental involvement in their children's learning

A learning organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School-based staff development• Ability to build capacity• Ability to sustain change• Willingness to share with others outside the institution• Learns to live with change
-------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

*Based upon a report to OFSTED by Sammons, P. et al (1995)

Barber, (1996, p. 132) linked school effectiveness with the creation of the appropriate climate for school improvement when he said,

The salvation of the education system depends on the subtle relationship between schools taking responsibility for their own improvement, and government (and other agencies) creating a climate and context within which they are encouraged to improve themselves. Neither on its own is sufficient.

In this respect OFSTED could be seen as an ‘agency’.

Criticisms of school effectiveness research, (Harris 2001, p. 12) have focussed upon the tendency for studies to show a “‘snapshot’ of a school rather than “a moving picture”. Gray and Wilcox (1995, p. 176) agree,

An inspection is not really a snapshot at all, with all the clarity and instantaneity this implies but rather a somewhat blurred image or set of images. In brief, it is a description of the condition of the school from an indeterminate point in the recent past to the time when the inspection took place.

This is seen as potentially unhelpful if schools are seen as dynamic and evolving organisations, constantly seeking to move forwards. The concept of a 'snapshot' has been associated with the OFSTED process also (Ouston et al, 1996, p. 6).

An early warning of assessing the characteristics of effectiveness leadership was offered by Fiedler, (1967 p. 261), when he said,

Leadership performance ... depends as much on the organisation as it depends upon the leader's attributes...it is simply not meaningful to speak of an effective leader or of an ineffective leader; we can only speak of a leader who tends to be effective in one situation and ineffective in another. If we wish to increase organisational and group effectiveness we must learn not only how to train leaders more effectively but also how to build an organisational environment in which the leader can perform well.

Goldstein and Myers, (1997, p. 2) offer further warnings and believe the phrase 'school effectiveness' to be a misnomer as it is "multi-dimensional". They suggest that, schools differ in their effectiveness by curriculum subject and are differentially effective for different groups of pupils: their effectiveness also changes over time.

According to Goldstein and Myers, there is not a single view of what can be construed as effectiveness; they cast doubt on whether the characteristics of effective schools noted above can be sustained. In addition they point out the necessity for longitudinal studies which track the achievement of students across both primary and secondary schools before conclusions can be drawn. Finally, they assert (p. 4), "School effectiveness research has no necessary direct connection with 'standards'" and therefore, by implication the raising of standards which was one of the primary purposes of OFSTED.

School improvement has been defined by Hopkins, (1996, p. 32) as "a strategy for educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change." The implication that fundamental school change will be involved, is replicated in the writing of many, for example Fullan, (1993 and 2001); Gray and Wilcox, (1995); Hopkins and Reynolds (2001); Harris, (2001).

Stoll and Fink (1996, p. 43) define school improvement as, "a series of concurrent and recurring processes" in which a school

- enhances pupil outcomes
- focuses on teaching and learning
- builds the capacity to take charge of change regardless of its source
- defines its own direction
- assesses its current culture and works to develop positive cultural norms
- has strategies to achieve its goals
- addresses the internal conditions that enhance change
- maintains momentum during periods of turbulence
- monitors and evaluates its process, its progress, achievement and development.

In the early phase of school improvement research the emphasis was on organisational change, school self-evaluation and the 'ownership' of change by individual schools and teachers. However systematic linkage with these ideas was variable. By the 1990s school improvement strategies were being enhanced by the more quantitative approach of the school effectiveness research.

Influenced by writers like Fullan, practitioners began to take up the concepts from both, making the linkages that researchers themselves were reluctant to make, according to Hopkins and Reynolds (2001).

At the same time, "... there was growing evidence of an enhanced utilisation of the insights of school improvement and school effectiveness by many governments and

official agencies”, (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, p. 460). Added to other initiatives at the government level such as Local Management of Schools (LMS), (Education Reform Act, 1988), the impetus for change in schools became powerful and unrelenting.

However warning notes were sounded by Fullan (1993, p. 49) when he said, “... to restructure is not to reculture”.

In a comparative study of five cases (Australia (Victoria), New Zealand, Chicago, Kentucky, and California) by Leithwood et al., (1999) he found that where reform is performance based, that is focused on student outcomes, there was no evidence that student achievement had risen. Hopkins and Reynolds (2001, p. 462) have drawn the conclusion that,

Unless central reforms address issues to do with teaching and learning, as well as dealing with capacity-building at the school level, within a context of external support, then the aspirations of reform are unlikely to be realised.

In this context school reform could be seen as synonymous with school improvement.

From the discussion of school effectiveness and school improvement presented in this section it can be seen that school effectiveness research has provided the school community and policy makers with evidence of what effective organisations, particularly

schools, do. Much of the school evidence has been quantitative: examination results, attendance figures and similar information that could be measured.

School improvement research has been seen as qualitative in many ways with a 'more emotional and reactive nature' (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, p. 473). School improvement is likely to be unique to the individual school and may not be easily replicated by others. It embraces the philosophy of change and may be affected by the values and beliefs of the school and of the individuals within the school.

How do schools improve?

Harris (2001, p. 12) reflects the view that school effectiveness research,

...has rarely been detailed enough to provide information on what is needed for school improvement. The lack of a focus upon the conditions which foster effectiveness or improvement in a school has meant that much of this research base in terms of school development and improvement has proved to be somewhat limited.

Hopkins and Reynolds, (2001), Stoll and Fink, (1996), Harris, (2001) and Fullan (1993, 2001) have recognised the need for school based change and improvement to be site specific; what will work in one school context may not work in another. But even more so, what works in one Faculty or classroom may not work in another. They also see that

the need is for sustainable change and improvement even though schools are not stable and key factors affecting improvement, such as key staff changes, may be detrimental. Stoll and Fink (1996) provide an outline of prerequisites for school improvement (see Table 2). They argue that the culture of a school is important to its ability to improve. Fullan (1991, p. 117) noted,

Educational change depends on what teachers do and think – it's as simple and as complex as that.

A common factor in Fullan's work is the need to develop the capacity of schools to improve. He recognises the need for change on both a personal and systemic level, (1993, p. 40), "...in the current struggle between state accountability and local autonomy, both are right."

The importance of schools having the capacity to improve, not simply an understanding of how improvement can be striven for, and sustain it, is described by many (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001; Hargreaves, 2001; Harris and Bennett, (Eds) 2001; Ferguson et al, 2000; Stoll and Fink, 1996; Gary and Wilcox, 1995; Harris, 2002).

Table 2: Internal conditions necessary for school improvement

Internal conditions necessary for school improvement	
Climate Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological state of teachers • Building of self-esteem and trust in teachers • Physical well being of teachers • Building positive school image (attendance and behaviour of students and staff for example)
Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning of personal values and beliefs • Sharing of group / school vision
Joint Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff sharing planning roles • Collaboration
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of leadership style • Transformational leadership • Sharing of leadership roles
Involvement and empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared decision-making • Consultation including pupils and other stakeholders • Confidence to take decisions
Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal and external collaboration to stimulate challenge
Monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and evaluation of planning, processes and outcomes
Problem seeking and problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well developed coping strategies • Seeking and solving potential 'blocks' to progress
Staff development and resource assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing professional development • Access to varied types of resource • Professional dialogue
Adapting management structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricting existing practices e.g timetables, policies, roles and responsibilities
Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School defines its own direction • Takes ownership of appropriate initiatives

Barber (1996) noted the sense of purpose in successful schools and the fact that teachers talked about where the school was going professionally and academically rather than concentrate upon the aspects of their working lives that could be seen as 'blockers' to progress.

Similarly, Stoll and Fink (1996), speaking for many, suggest that schools engaged in improvement strategies and processes pay attention to the possible impediments. They described these (p. 55) as potentially:

- mobility of teachers and principals;
- sustaining commitment whether the initiative was inspired internally or externally;
- micropolitical pressures;
- retaining enthusiasm and commitment at the individual site/person level in a decentralised system;
- being able to show causality from action to improvement where there may be many strategies working together;
- retaining a clarity of view about process and outcomes;
- developing strategies to embed initiatives as they progress;
- avoidance of 'paralysis' associated with external pressures such as OFSTED;
- addressing issues that are site-specific.

There are yet more aspects to improvement that warrant attention. A school focused upon improvement has an atmosphere of challenge and has high expectations in terms of achievement for all who work there, students and adults (Barber, 1996; Fullan, 1993; Macbeath and Sammons, 1998; Reynolds, 2003). Fullan (1993, p.68) notes, that an atmosphere in school which is 'blame free', allowing and encouraging risk taking to develop in teaching and learning is important to the school culture. "Establishing flexible structures and learning teams with a degree of freedom to take risks and learn from open-ended situations are essential."

In this respect school improvement can be seen as uncertain, susceptible to challenge and distraction, with fragile links to student outcomes unless it can be sustained. It could be said that working within such an organisation is likely to be uncomfortable and chaotic, or exciting.

School effectiveness / improvement and inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)

Barber, (1996 p. 125) commented that the impact of OFSTED inspection as it neared the end of its first four-year cycle was, "dramatic". He praised the input of school effectiveness research into the educational debate, highlighting as it did the effect of schools on student achievement. Having given a brief overview of school effectiveness and its powerful links with school improvement he says (p. 148),

It is essential to have in place an effective means of identifying failing schools. This demands the continuation and refinement of a national inspection system which is able to ensure the consistency of inspections across the country. It also requires clarity about the inspection criteria which define success [of a school]. The central element of this definition should relate to the capacity of the school to improve itself.

Barber argued that as schools improved and high levels of inspection became less necessary, schools which, as a matter of course, evaluated their work and adjusted their development plans accordingly could have the requirements for inspection diminished. He proposed that money saved could then be used by OFSTED to help, (p. 149), “less effective schools ... in the development of constructive post-inspection improvement strategies.” Famously, Barber coined the phrase that, (p. 149), “intervention in schools should be in inverse proportion to success” and that any intervention should be “carefully planned and based on knowledge of the school effectiveness and school improvement research.” It is interesting to note that by 2003, in the second term of a Labour government, intervention in inverse proportion to success had become the guidance for OFSTED inspections and the mantra for much of the advisory and inspection work of Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Michael Barber worked at the heart of the Labour government from the moment it came to power in 1997. His influence on policy-making was clear.

The role of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)

Following the Education (Schools) Act of 1992, OFSTED began work in 1993. Its purpose as outlined in the OFSTED Handbook (1995 p. 8) was

to identify strengths and weaknesses so that schools may improve the quality of education they provide and raise educational standards achieved by their pupils. The published report and summary report provide information for parents and the local community about the quality and standards of the school, consistent with the requirements of the *Parent's Charter*.

The inspection process was to give direction to the school's strategy for planning, review and improvement by 'rigorous external evaluation' and identifying key issues for action. Information was then used by the Chief Inspector for the Annual Report (see below).

OFSTED has a statutory responsibility to inspect schools in order to inform the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (title established in 1997, previous titles followed the name of the Department) about: the quality of education provided by schools in England; the educational standards achieved by pupils; whether resources made available to schools are managed efficiently; and, the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils.

To fulfil these requirements, OFSTED set up a system of school inspections in which all state schools are inspected at least once every six years. OFSTED manages this process and establishes the guidelines for it. In its advisory capacity, OFSTED is asked by the government to report on a wide range of issues. Evidence for this advice is taken from the inspections of schools as well as commissioned research.

Since 1997, OFSTED has had responsibility for inspecting Local Education Authorities and, since 1998, for inspecting the provision of Initial Teacher Training and In-service training for teachers, where they are publicly funded. By 2002 the inspection of Nursery and Childcare provision were added to OFSTED's responsibilities.

The OFSTED directorate is interesting in its complexity and its size. There are approximately 18 divisions covering all areas of work from Early Years Education to Higher Education; Quality and Compliance, Independent school inspection, international visits, Special Educational Needs, Nursery and Childcare and Post Compulsory Education Provision. OFSTED has the largest database in the world holding as it does every item of information for every inspection of every educational establishment in England carried out since 1993. There are approximately 24,000 schools in England; by 2004 they had been inspected at least twice.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has used the information from OFSTED to inform national policy building. The DfES Standards website demonstrates

the number of papers and reports that the DfES is supporting or promoting on the theme of school improvement, many include OFSTED advice or evidence derived from inspections of schools.

The Chief Inspector of Schools is required by statute to report to Parliament annually. Since the first report was published, the breadth of the report has increased significantly, reflecting the increased role of OFSTED itself. Over the years schools, which are all sent a copy, have recognised the value of the information it contains; they use it to compare the processes within their own institutions. Table 3 compares the comments and improvements in the quality and standards of education within English schools that have been noted in his report by Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector (HMCI) from1997 until 2001. The schools in this study were part of the reporting cohort in 1997 and 2000.

Table 3 OFSTED, Improving areas and areas warranting attention*

Year of the report	Number of Inspections Undertaken	Primary	Secondary	Improvements made since the last report	Areas for Improvement	Other comments
1997	7,284	6,218	645	Upward trend in examination results; higher proportion of good teaching. Improved internal monitoring	Teaching quality particularly the use of ICT, literacy and numeracy, quality of leadership and leadership	Potential for appraisal and performance management to impose rigour into the system

Year of the report	Number of Inspections Undertaken	Primary	Secondary	Improvements made since the last report	Areas for Improvement	Other comments
				and assessments	strategies for school improvement	
1998	7,503	6,027	955	Exam and test results: KS 1 and 2; GCSE and A level results Attendance Improved teaching Change in culture and climate in schools	Literacy Numeracy Variation in performance between schools Under-achievement Differences in achievement between boys and girls Increasing expectations	Children aged 8 do not do well in number work compared to other countries Teaching in years 3, 4, 8 and 9 is weakest.
1999	7,284	6,218	645	Achievement in socially deprived areas Less under-achievement generally More schools emerging from Special measures Subject knowledge of teachers improving	Training and support of teachers Role of LEAs Use of ICT Achievement of boys, particularly in writing	National literacy and Numeracy strategies High quality head-teachers ITT Beacon schools
2000	4,520	3,508	704	Monitoring of teaching and learning Small rise in	ICT in Primary and Secondary schools Assessment	Leadership differences

Year of the report	Number of Inspections Undertaken	Primary	Secondary	Improvements made since the last report	Areas for Improvement	Other comments
				achievement (English and Maths at KS 2 which was spectacular) Behaviour Quality of teaching	Raising expectations Variations in achievement between schools	Resourcing problems: fairer funding Recruitment of teachers Education theorising and obfuscation
2001	4908	4210	698	High quality leadership Departmental management in secondary schools Improved accommodation and funding Improved teaching quality	Boys' writing Transition to secondary school Attainment in significant groups Low level disruption in class Gaps between high and low achieving schools too wide	Lack of support from LEAs Fairer funding nationally Recruitment and retention of teachers

* Numbers may not add up as Special Schools, Nursery Schools, Pupil Referral Units or similar institutions are included in the total number of inspections carried out.

Despite the work of Kogan and Maden, (1999); Ouston, Earley and Fidler (1996); Earley (Ed.) (1998); Macbeath (1999); Wilcox and Gray, (1996), Gray and Wilcox, (1995);

Ferguson et al, (2000) and Creese and Earley (1999), research into the effectiveness of OFSTED in fulfilling its aim of improvement through inspection has been limited. OFSTED has not commissioned any independent evaluation of its work. The measure of whether schools are improving and the relationship of the improvement to inspection are unclear; assertions are based upon the inspection data. The assertions that improvement has taken place are reported to Parliament through the annual report of HMCI and interrogated through the Education and Employment Committee on an annual basis (Education and Employment, 1999) but have been contested (Goldstein and Myers, 1997). The evidence of this study would suggest that three of the case study schools did improve post inspection but one declined markedly.

There follows discussion of the areas in which OFSTED has found that schools have improved, as reported to Parliament in the annual HMCI paper. This is linked later in this chapter to the evidence reviewed earlier on school improvement. However it is worth noting at this point that in the current study, the impact on school improvement of other government, local or school-based initiatives that may have contributed either to the national picture of school improvement or to the improvement of any individual institution cannot be demonstrated in isolation. There are conflicting claims but OFSTED's role in ensuring school compliance with national policies and what is held to be 'best practice', and in making judgements about and reporting non-compliance is seen as being very influential on individual institutions and on LEAs.

Evidence of school improvement

In his report of 1999, HMCI, Chris Woodhead, noted that, based upon inspection data, principally classroom observations, the performance of teachers had improved since OFSTED had started inspecting schools: teachers were teaching better and pupils were learning more. He made three points, however: that the performance of schools with similar backgrounds varied too much; that the issues that were priorities in his first report remained the focus of attention, namely the quality of teaching, literacy and numeracy and the quality of leadership; the percentage of lessons seen by OFSTED inspectors where the teaching was judged to be less than satisfactory showed significant improvement but was still not good enough (see Table 4).

Table 4 Percentage of less than satisfactory lessons seen by OFSTED in 1993/4 and 1997/8.

Inspection Year	KS 1	KS 2	KS 3	KS 4
1993/4	25	30	19	17
1997/8	8	8	10	7

In the 1999 report HMCI was able to note the improvements seen by inspectors between the first and second inspections in secondary schools; primary schools had not begun their second round of inspections at that time.

Table 3 shows the other areas that were improving, according to HMCI and those that still warranted attention. (Source: Annual Report from HMCI. OFSTED, 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000)

The tone of the 1999 and other reports from HMCI Woodhead could be said to be assertive if not strident. The reports often created an atmosphere of mistrust and unnecessary anger amongst schools and research communities, (Education and Employment Committee, 1999).

In a comment often repeated by him, the HMCI said, (1999 p. 17),

We have now inspected every school in the country. We know what makes a good teacher and headteacher. It is not, therefore, research into the nature of teaching and school leadership that is needed, so much as new thinking about how we can use our current knowledge better.

This and other similar comments caused major tensions within the research community. Political tensions were prevalent and continued to be so during the HMCI, Chris Woodhead's, term in office which ended in 2001. In the 1999 report he ended his commentary by saying, (p. 21),

Nobody now questions the need to raise standards. Fewer take refuge in socio-economic explanations of school failure. Most within the profession accept the beliefs about education and teaching which have dominated

practice for the last forty years must be, at least questioned. The culture is less self-indulgent. We have a new and rigorous focus on what actually works. As a consequence, teachers will be able to achieve more at less personal cost.

At a meeting of the National Association of Headteachers in June 1999, (personal note) the HMCI was asked about the reliability and consistency of OFSTED reports. He commented,

In your shoes I would be worried about that too but I don't think there are [reasons to be worried]. Some teams and some inspectors may not be inspecting to the criteria we have laid down.

Because relationships [between head and inspector] are different, standards are different [from what they were earlier in the inspection regime]. We are now investigating and giving more time to monitoring of inspectors and inspection reports, especially the Rgl [Registered Inspector]. There are quality standards for contractors, they have to show improvement or they are struck off. We are dependent upon feed back from schools but they don't make a fuss because they have a punitive view of what may happen.

He acknowledged that the Parliamentary Committee had recommended dialogue with schools and that inspectors should take every opportunity to give back information to teachers. He advised the heads (personal note) that there would be changes to the

OFSTED Framework with the introduction of 'light touch' inspections (see below). HMCI said, "Improvement comes from teachers being given confidence," and repeated a remark that had been widely reported in the news media that if an inspection report were not useful to a school, they should, "Put it in the bin."

He shared with the meeting (personal note) that the language of reports is monitored. Documentation seen during the course of this study, (1997) confirmed this but no copy was allowed. The monitoring that was in evidence in 1997 was concerned with language: it consisted of comments about grammar and the standard of writing; there were no comments on the document seen concerning the quality of the report itself in terms of the help it offered the school to improve. HMCI added that the purpose of the inspection report is to (personal note),

...communicate information but they [the reports] can be unintelligible and poorly written. The process gives Key Issues or recommendations but heads and governors make the professional judgement about how to act and when. Linking with school development plans has to be a matter for the school's judgement but they have to be able to justify their decisions on OFSTED's next visit.

From 1997-1999 there was intense public debate within schools and the government about the role of OFSTED and its methodology of inspection. It had been expected by many heads and academics that the change of government to Labour in 1997 and the appointment of David Blunkett as Secretary for Education, would bring about a change in the HMCI and a significant change in direction of OFSTED. Some supposed that

OFSTED might be discontinued. In fact there was no change in policy but there was to be an introduction of a so-called 'light touch' inspection of successful schools (see views of Barber above).

During September of 1999 the debate concerning the value of OFSTED to school improvement between Chris Woodhead, then HMCI and Nick Davies, a journalist filled the pages of the educationally influential Guardian newspaper (<http://education.guardian.co.uk/specialreports/educationcrisis/story/0,5500,84111,00>).

The argument centred upon the use that OFSTED, HMCI Woodhead in particular, had made of data and statistics in his assertions that schools were improving. Davies asserted that the comparisons that Woodhead had made in his Annual report were baseless given that in Davies' view there was no comparative data available in 1994 (when Chris Woodhead became HMCI) to show the number of poor teachers for example or the number of unsatisfactory lessons in schools. His point was not to say that Woodhead was wrong; it was to say that OFSTED could not know what they put forward as knowledge. Davies said,

The entire basis of comparison is invalid because in the last five years [1994-1999], the methods of inspection, the criteria of measurement and the number of grades [of examination results] have all changed.

The 1998/99 annual report from HMCI Woodhead, laid before Parliament in 2000, made fewer claims of progress. It noted that there was a smaller rise in achievement at KS 3

(aged 14) and that over 6% of students failed to gain any GCSE qualification. HMCI commented favourably on the improvements in teaching and leadership and noted the impact of government programmes such as Excellence in Cities.

As in previous reports, HMCI Woodhead commented strongly, he said, (p. 20), in relation to the work of LEAs and particularly what he termed, "...ineffective monitoring visits". Further he said,

It makes no sense whatsoever for LEAs to replicate OFSTED's work ... If all LEAs were to intervene in inverse proportion to success, standards in fewer schools would deteriorate between inspections. Problems begin when the rhetoric of school improvement spawns a plethora of ineffective and often unwelcome initiatives which, more often than not, waste money and confuse and irritate schools.

It could be argued that many of the initiatives then being undertaken by schools were not the result of LEA directives but of government ones. Further on (p. 21) he made reference to what he called,

'...the emptiness of education theorising' that [it] obfuscates the classroom realities that really matter, to tackle bureaucratic excess and financial waste.

This was seen as ironic by schools as OFSTED itself had been responsible for much of the increased burden of bureaucracy. Separately, researchers in Higher Education felt that their work was again being singled out for criticism that they saw as being

unjustified and resembling personal comment by the HMCI. Such personal views, not supported by evidence from the work of OFSTED, had become a feature of the HMCI's remarks on other occasions. He was cross-questioned by the Select Committee of Education and Employment on 1 November 2000 about a remark he was quoted as making that called into question certain types of university degree courses. He admitted that it was personal opinion. (<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmduemp/960>). The effect of such incidents was that the comments that were well founded in inspection evidence tended to be discredited along side the personal opinions.

In his inaugural Presidential address to the BERA conference, (http://www.ioe.ac.uk/directorate/bera_speech.htm), Peter Mortimore, then Professor at the Institute of Education reflected upon the attacks on educational research, particularly from OFSTED. He quoted the comment of the HMCI in the introduction to the Tooley report (Tooley, 1998), "Education research is not making the contribution it should. Much that is unpublished is, on this analysis, at best an irrelevance and a distraction." As Mortimer pointed out much of OFSTED's own work was deeply flawed; inspection evidence was sometimes seen as an acceptable substitute for research. He rejected this as the data was collected for very different purposes to research.

Examination of the evidence of the data collected by OFSTED at the schools in this study would give support to the view that data was used for a variety of reasons, not necessarily linked to the purposes for which it had been collected. More than one of the headteachers in the study warned of the possible dangers of moving from OFSTED

data to a position implying proof that school inspection does, per se, bring about school improvement.

In the annual report of 2001, the new HMCI Mike Tomlinson, used the rise in levels of achievement as the measure of how schools had improved. He itemised the following (Table 5):

**Table 5 Measure of schools’ improvement in the annual
report of HMCI Mike Tomlinson 2001**

Year of examination	Subject	Percentage achieving Level 4 (KS 2)
1996	English	57
	Maths	54
2000	English	75
	Maths	72

Rises at GCSE level were also quoted but in a less precise way so no direct comparisons could be made. At Advanced (A) level General Certificate of Education (GCE) the rise was reported in terms of points scored: the average point score at A level in 1995 for students taking two or more A levels was 15.9 and in 2000 it was 18.2.

The themes of this report were quality of teaching and leadership, variations between institutions and the way that secondary schools in particular built on prior achievement.

The Select Committee on Education and Skills report

(<http://www.parliament.the-stationeryoffice.co.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmeduski/437/4>),

which met in December 2001, noted that OFSTED would finish its second cycle of inspections in 2003/2004. The committee welcomed the change of tone of the HMCI Mike Tomlinson, evident in his annual report.

The committee report covered a number of aspects of the work of OFSTED. Additional information had been provided by a number of interested bodies. HMCI Tomlinson told the committee that improvements in schools had been achieved. He said (para. 13):

Inspection has played its part in focussing attention on literacy and numeracy, but it has not itself delivered that improvement, our teachers have done that.

A concern was raised, (para. 2) about OFSTED's claims that regular inspection of schools had been a powerful force for improving the quality of education and increasing standards achieved. Seventeen academics led by Professor Carol Fitz-Gibbon had argued in a memorandum submitted to the Select Committee, that stringent research was required into sampling, reliability, validity and the impact of the entire system of inspection in education. A Royal Commission was called for by this group of academics to consider the extent to which judgements were fair and accurate and that there was

value for money in OFSTED inspections. The Select Committee did not approve the suggestion but did propose that there should be (para. 3) “a stringent external evaluation of the soundness of OFSTED’s methods”.

School improvement linked to inspection processes

As noted above, schools did improve from 1993, the beginning of the OFSTED process but there could have been many reasons for this improvement. Some of the reasons follow.

The government was able to demonstrate one way in which schools were using the inspection process to improve after HMI surveyed 51 schools in 1995.

(<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/otherresources/publications/improving/school/survey>)

This survey suggested that a school’s approach to and preparation for OFSTED inspection itself was important to the ability of the school to learn from the outcomes of the inspection report. Advice was offered on the role of action planning in the process of improvement, based upon data gleaned from the 51 schools. This was enhanced by information from the second round of OFSTED inspections: the processes of action planning used after first inspections did help school improvement and schools were able to show clear progress in their second inspections. Over a period of years, schools learnt how to write better action plans and how to link them to their school development plans.

However there could be a fine line between positive activity associated with preparation and over preparation, which, it has been suggested, has had a detrimental effect upon children's education because of the workload placed upon teachers (Kogan and Maden, 1999a; Ouston, Earley and Fidler, 1996; Earley, (Ed.) 1998; Macbeath, 1999; Wilcox and Gray, 1996, Gray and Wilcox, 1995; Ferguson et al, 2000; Creese and Earley, 1999). Teachers were still said to be spending too much time on preparation for inspection almost ten years after OFSTED inspection began, (Curtis, May 2002).

At the meeting noted above, (June 1999), with HMCI Chris Woodhead, headteachers were told that there would be a change to OFSTED inspection procedures; OFSTED would be using 'light touch' inspections in successful schools. He said, "There is no excuse for subjecting a school to the full process unnecessarily". In making their decisions of where to visit, OFSTED would be looking at 3-5 year trends within a school. These co-called 'light touch' inspections would be half the number of inspector days. This was a significant change to the attitude that had prevailed between the years 1993 and 1997 when OFSTED took no account of the success of a school or its ability to improve when deciding to inspect. Barber (1995) first proposed this changed process which was to be supported by school self-review, when he spoke of inspection in inverse proportion to success (see above).

HMCI noted at the headteachers' meeting, (June, 1999) of his understanding that the Select Committee was concerned about teacher morale. His view (personal note) was that,

...the only people who raise standards in schools are headteachers. Literacy and numeracy strategies are good but you [headteachers] must have courage to do what you want to do.

The implication was that it was the headteacher's responsibility to ensure that the morale of teachers stayed high by not implementing programmes or strategies, literacy and numeracy for example, required by government unless headteachers wished to. Given that OFSTED was required to monitor implementation, it was likely to be difficult for headteachers to refuse to comply without incurring criticism that could have been detrimental to a school and its inspection report.

In response to a question he commented that improvement resulted from inspection, only in so far as the use that is made of the report. The evidence [in the inspection report] is contributory to moving schools on more quickly. Interference [in the school] should be in inverse proportion to success.

In this respect it could be seen that there had been considerable changes to the approach being used by OFSTED since 1993. Table 6 summarises some of these changes.

Table 6 Changes in inspection since 1993

Features of the inspection system in 1993	Developments since the system was established
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection of all schools over a period set by the Secretary of State – initially four years. • A Framework for inspection, covering the four key areas of quality, standards, the efficiency with which resources are managed, and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. • A single inspection model with the number of inspector-days depending on the size of school. • Inspections arranged by OFSTED using a mix of public and private sector contractors • Common inspection standards, achieved through the rules set for the registration and training of inspectors leading teams • The involvement in all inspections of a lay inspector without a professional background in education. • Monitoring of inspections by HMI. • The preparation before each inspection of Pre-inspection Context and School Indicator (PICSi) reports, summarising relevant data about the school and its performance • A meeting between the inspectors and parents before the inspection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A move to a six-year period during which all schools must be inspected. • New procedures for following up schools requiring special measures. • The identification of schools with serious weaknesses and underachieving schools. • Tighter quality control, now carried out in partnership with public and private sector inspection contractors • Training and enrolment arrangements for all inspection team members. • A move towards inspection in inverse proportion to success, with short inspection for those schools which appear to be most effective. • The preparation of Performance and Assessment (PANDA) reports which are sent annually to all schools to inform self-evaluation and target-setting • Shorter notice of inspections, down from one year to between six and ten weeks • Reducing the amount of preparation required for inspections, and making more use of ICT to transfer information

Features of the inspection system in 1993	Developments since the system was established
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports published shortly after the inspection, with a summary designed for parents. • Action plans drawn up by schools to respond to the inspection, and also published • Identification of schools failing or likely to fail to provide an acceptable standard of education and therefore requiring special measures • Advice to the Secretary of State and a published Annual Report to Parliament drawing on all of OFSTED's activities, but mainly informed by the thousands of school inspections carried out each year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A requirement for schools to fill in their town self-evaluations before inspection, and encouragement to keep them up to date

Source: OFSTED, 2001

It does not follow that the above features were always adhered to. For example, the prerequisite parents' meeting did not actually happen in school A (1995), as described in chapter 5. Also, that there are significant omissions from the process. For example, there is no reference to the need for feedback sessions and a willingness to have conversations which could be developmental. Feedback but not dialogue was a part of the OFSTED methodology from 1993 onwards.

The Parliamentary committee report (1999, p.v.) on the work of OFSTED said,

OFSTED inspectors can act best as catalysts for change and improvement. This, we believe, can best be achieved through the

development of a 'professional dialogue' in which the potential benefits of inspection are realised.

Dialogue in this context is properly structured feedback to schools, particularly teachers. Dialogue, "...to help teachers to improve through clear identification of what does and does not work", had become part of the OFSTED Framework of inspection by 2000 (OFSTED, 2000 p. 29).

It could be argued that the consultation on OFSTED (OFSTED, 2001) was concerned only with the operational side of the OFSTED process. From this, it could be argued that OFSTED was more concerned with the process than the effects upon school improvement, even though the consultation document is entitled 'Improving inspection, improving schools.'

Action planning

OFSTED and the DFEE/DfES (1995) have suggested that the probability of a school improving as a result of inspection depends upon the school's ability to learn from the inspection. It was suggested at the DFEE/OFSTED conference for governors of schools held in 1995 that action planning was critical to this process.

The statutory requirements for action plans were laid out in circular 7/93 (DFEE). The governors of a school were required to:

- Address the key issues identified in the inspection report;
- Determine some action to address each key issue;
- Identify a person responsible;
- Establish monitoring through measures of progress and success criteria.

In the 1995 survey HMI looked at the action plans of 55 schools (<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/otherresources/publications/improving/school/survey>) and reported that:

- Two thirds of schools were adequately prepared to create an action plan;
- Around 80% of schools dealt with all Key Issues, set out clear timetables and identified those responsible for actions;
- A third of schools had plans with some good features;
- A quarter of schools were just beginning to show improvements in teaching, pupils' achievements, and teachers' and pupils' expectations or pupils' attitude to learning;
- Two fifths of schools were managing plans and improvements well.

Common weaknesses in action plans were that the majority of schools were not costing their plans fully and nearly all omitted evaluation of pupils' achievements as well as needed help with establishing and using indicators to measure success.

OFSTED had advised governing bodies (OFSTED, 1993, 1995, 1997) that before an inspection they should organise the work of inspection, using any available support and training. Further they should understand the OFSTED Framework and plan their own contacts with inspectors.

The HMI survey (1995) showed that good action plans addressed the key issues of the inspection report, contained all the headings of the OFSTED circular, were short, and were written in a way that was accessible to parents and governors. The survey concluded that the plans should contain overall objectives and priorities and be linked to school development plans. Usefully it was suggested that schools should attach targets and monitoring strategies alongside sections on the effects of the plan on students and student outcomes.

The HMI survey commented that effective action plans showed that schools had good experience of staff and school development. HMI noted that where schools accepted the report findings they had the determination to correct any major weaknesses, organised their consultations and the writing of the plans, seeking help from outside agencies where appropriate and had already begun to improve standards.

It is interesting to note that OFSTED issued fresh advice to schools on action planning entitled *Action Planning for School Improvement* (OFSTED, 2001). In this document there is only a passing reference to the fact that it is a *governors'* action plan, (para 11 bullet point 4). Governors are still included in the plan, principally in a monitoring role. Unlike the period when action plans were being written by the case study schools, there is no suggestion that governors should be writing them.

A second point worthy of note is that the document has little to say about schools that have been shown through inspection to be successful. It could be thought that little needs be said but all schools have to have an action plan post inspection and they all have to show how they are going to improve so it would have been appropriate to have included advice and exemplar material for them too. In some ways it can be said to be even more challenging for leaders to manage a successful school and keep it moving forwards than it is a weak school (Fullan, 2002 and 2003; Stoll and Fink, 1996).

Given the crucial role played by action planning in the inspection process as well as for a school's long-term outcomes, it will form a major focus of this study.

Summary

This chapter began by describing, briefly, school effectiveness and school improvement and outlined some of the research underpinning the two ideas. It described some of the characteristics of an effective school and detailed elements associated with school improvement.

The chapter reviewed briefly some of the evidence of school improvement offered by OFSTED, the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) and Department for Education and Skills (DFES) from 1996. From this evidence it showed a link between inspection and improvement in schools.

In the chapter it has been shown that effectiveness and improvement are not the same, neither are they sequential or natural outcomes, one from another. Both are needed to create the right environment for school improvement.

By tracking the elements of the process of inspection by OFSTED, the chapter has shown how the process changed between 1993-5 to include a developmental approach and an expectation that schools would learn from it.

The preparations for inspection and action planning, post inspection, have been shown to be intrinsic parts of the inspection process and to a school's ability to improve.

Chapter 3 attempts to assess how effective is the Office for Standards in Education. It begins with a review of some of the systemic changes prevalent at the time of OFSTED's inception in England and defines educational accountability. The chapter describes inspection as an accountability process at the school level, in Australia (New South Wales), New Zealand, USA (Kentucky) and Scotland.

The role and development of OFSTED is described chronologically in chapter 3 and compared with the international examples. Finally, Chapter 3 details the limited research on OFSTED's effectiveness.

Chapter 3: Literature review – the effectiveness of OFSTED as an accountability system

Introduction

As introduced and outlined in the first chapter, this study attempts to assess how effective the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) is as an accountability mechanism. In later chapters the study will try to ascertain from the evidence available, whether the schools in the study did improve as a result of being inspected. But first, this chapter begins with a brief context which outlines the systemic change processes that were prevalent in the education systems of the largely English-speaking world at the time of OFSTED's inception and more recently. It then defines educational accountability and tracks briefly the significant changes that resulted from the pursuance of school level accountability, beginning in the late 1970s in New South Wales (Australia), New Zealand, England, Kentucky (USA) and Scotland. The chapter examines the role of: the Education Review Office of New Zealand; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland; the review activities of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training; and the Kentucky Department for Education School Accountability Index. The role and development of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) in England is described chronologically from 1992 to recent times. A comparison is made between OFSTED and the international examples before detailing the research on OFSTED's effectiveness and the government response.

Context

It has been said (Murphy and Adams, 1998) that schools have been in a state of perpetual restructuring over the last twenty years. Whilst they were writing about the USA primarily, the premise appears to be pertinent for other parts of the English-speaking world such as England, Scotland, Australia and New Zealand. In the opinion of Murphy and Adams, the catalysts for reform have changed over this period. Earlier reform movements arose out of a perception that there were systemic deficiencies. More recently reform seems to have been triggered by broader economic, social and political issues and concerns.

Murphy and Adams identified three eras of reform. The first was an era of intensification, from approximately 1980-1987, when reform centred on top-down government efforts to tighten control of education. This corresponds to the early centralist expressions of disquiet about schools and schooling in England as reflected in the Callaghan speech given at Ruskin College, 18th October 1976 (Callaghan, 1987) and the arrival of the Conservative government in 1978. Secondly, Murphy and Adams note a period of restructuring from 1988-1995 when there were shifts to decentralisation, empowerment for parents and schools and consumer choice, called 'marketisation' by Macpherson (1996) and Jenkins (1995). Again there were parallels with the experience in other parts of the English-speaking world. Lastly, Murphy and Adams noted a third era, that of reformation, from 1996 to the present. Here the emphasis was on standards, accountability and privatisation.

Globally, education systems have shown these phases of change but it is noticeable that there is no demarcation or completion between one phase and the next. Neither is there necessarily a significant difference between one political ideology and another. In England similarities have been found in the way the changes were effected between the right wing Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher, and the centrist New Labour government of Tony Blair. It is interesting to note that the response to these pressures for educational reform across the world have also been similar.

Beckhard and Pritchard (1992) noted four major systemic strategies for reform. These were present in the reform of the English educational system although with differing emphases, and at various points since 1979. The four strategies are: standards based accountability; whole-school reform; market strategies; and, site-based decision making. Additionally, Beckhard and Pritchard differentiate between deep change and incremental change in their description of the impact of these four types of change.

Standards based accountability, or the use of established performance outcomes to systematically test student progress, teachers' teaching and parental satisfaction, are widely used by Governments or states to track top-down reforms. In England these principally take the form of Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations. In Scotland, the Scottish Certificate of Education and Arts (SCEA) is used. In New Zealand, the School

Certificate and in Kentucky (USA) the School Accountability Scores are used. To these formal tests may be added a range of 'softer' data such as levels of student attendance.

According to Beckhard and Pritchard, radical whole-school reform has sometimes been advocated in preference to incremental reform. On the other hand, it could be said that the National Curriculum (DFE, 1988) in England caused huge disruption for schools because of its gradual rather than wholesale implementation. Further, a report by the American Institute of Research (1999) noted in Falade (2001) cautions that in very few instances does school-wide reform demonstrate a strong positive influence on student learning. Leithwood et al (2000) concur with this caution.

Market strategies were embraced and implemented by the Thatcher/Major governments in England between 1979 and 1997. A number of Acts of Parliament (Education Bills) enacted between 1986 and 1993 exemplified the conservative belief that choice and lack of monopoly, in effect 'marketisation', would bring change to the schools' system (Jenkins, 1996; Hutton, 1996). Charter Schools and the voucher system in the USA promised a similar effect (Beare and Boyd, 1993; Macpherson, 1996; and, Boyd, 2000)

The fourth strategy for change, site based management, has probably been the one which has been most widely adopted across the world; in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and USA most notably but also to a degree in many other western countries (Beare, Caldwell and Milliken, 1989; Caldwell and Spinks, 1992; Beare and Boyd, 1993; Ball, 1995 and Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998).

It was against this background of systemic change in England that the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) was established.

Definition of effectiveness and accountability

To return to the research question concerning the effectiveness of OFSTED, it is helpful to define 'effectiveness'. According to the dictionary (Collins, 1995 p. 355) something is effective if it is capable of producing a result, operative, impressive and actual rather than theoretical. The thesaurus (Collins, 1995 p. 205) offers words such as capability, clout, cogency, potency, vigour and validity as synonyms for effectiveness. Using these definitions, the evidence put forward in this chapter would support the view that OFSTED is effective as an organisation. It could be a matter of dispute by schools (see Chapter 5 and 6) as to the validity of the inspection process. The data that is collected as a result of inspections is copious, valid and robust but there is evidence (see Chapter 2 and below) that the interpretation of the data has been open to argument (Woodhead, 1999). OFSTED could fairly be called an effective organisation. It is similar to other systems of accountability across the English-speaking world (see below).

Definitions of accountability have developed over time in England (Eraut 1977; Kogan, 1986). Kogan, (p.30) suggested:

Accountability requires authority for its discharge. Accountability and authority are responsibility and power converted into institutional entities. Internalised

feelings of responsibility linked to the use of undefined power take on institutional force when authority is added.

Kogan himself (1986, p.25) defines accountability as,

...a condition in which individual role holders are liable to review, and the application of sanctions, if their actions fail to satisfy those with whom they are in an accountability relationship.

This is the definition used in this study.

Kogan's work (1986, p. 32) predicted the legislation of the Thatcher Government (DFE 1986, 1988) and the Major Government (DFEE, 1992) when he said:

The policy issues of accountability in education are whether those normative and power responsive categories are enough to ensure that the schools deliver what is expected of them or whether more formal methods of calling to account backed by the use of authority are necessary, and whether formalising good feelings spoils them.

He was right on both counts. Successive Governments in England, New Zealand, Australia, Scotland and the USA, and of all political hues, did decide that formal methods of 'calling to account' were necessary. In the main, the governments did reject 'softer'

approaches, e.g. the Cambridge Accountability Project (Elliott, 1979), but, as a result, teachers argued (Fullan, 1993) that formalising good feelings did 'spoil' their perception of themselves as autonomous professionals (Leithwood, 2000).

Kogan (1986) examined normative and professional models of accountability. Normative models of accountability included those where public or state control entailed the use of authority by elected representatives, appointed officials, headteachers and others who manage schools such as Governors. Professional models involved the control of education by teachers and professional administrators. He associated self-reporting evaluation and consumerist control or influence with this normative model of accountability. According to Kogan, normative accountability could take the form of participatory democracy or partnership in the public sector or market mechanisms in the private or partly privatised public sector. Kogan argued (1986, p.16) that there are,

... linkages between models of government, values, definitions of feelings or affect, and knowledge structures or epistemologies which may not be rigorous or predictable but which none the less emerge as important and relevant.

Further he argued (Kogan, 1986) that evaluation is a prerequisite to accountability. He recognised that a structure of accountability is unlikely to be sustainable where powers are diffuse and where line management is weak. At the time of the Thatcher Government there was a clear intention to reduce the power of teacher unions (Jenkins, 1996; Hutton,

1996) and ensure that teachers were responsive to parental and Government wishes. Kogan, (1986 p. 44) noted,

The majority of teachers felt neither individually nor collectively accountable to governors and local government officers ... Justification for the school came from the interactions between the school and parents and children on a day-to-day basis. Accountability came ... from the expectations ... that the school should 'fit in' with their [the parents] values.

In contrast, Kogan recognised the model of accountability being imposed on English schools as essentially managerial: top-down, hierarchical and with judgements about school based outcomes or 'product' (examination results). Further, Kogan noted (p. 37) a control model of accountability was one in which calling to account is a power coercive strategy for changing teachers' behaviour in conformity with an externally imposed contract. It could be said that this is exactly what Thatcher's legislation sought to establish.

According to Kogan, the model of accountability preferred by teachers was peer evaluation. One example was the Cambridge Accountability Project (Elliott, 1979). This was established to raise student achievement. The chosen methodology was to create groups of teachers who were given time to develop ideas related to the development of the curriculum. The report (Elliott, 1979) commented that although the teachers had enjoyed the experience enormously and evaluated each other's work as being good, there was little evidence of school improvement that affected student outcomes positively or that

standards of achievement were raised. Interestingly, the outcomes, whilst not secret, were not intended for a parental, governor or political audience; it was simply not thought that these groups would be or were entitled to be interested in educational matters.

By 1977 the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) had produced a checklist (Kogan, 1986 p. 46) which made some judgements about schools based upon criteria such as the numbers of parents choosing the school. Parental preference was later included in data to be shared with parents for all schools (DFEE, 1992).

Kogan's position developed over time. He stated in an OECD report (1996, p. 29-33), that,

...accountability is different from evaluation or monitoring. Evaluation is the act of making a judgement. Accountability involves using the judgements for purposes of control or influence. Monitoring is a way in which accountability is ensured by using evaluative measures in a managerial or other control system.

Macpherson (1996, p. 3) suggested that accountability should be 'defined by the purposes it serves'. He concurred with Simey's view (1995, p. 20):

Accountability is not a routine but a principle. More than that it is a principle that serves a purpose. In a democracy, that purpose is to provide the basis for the

relationship between those who govern and those who consent to be governed.

The word consent provides the significant clue, implying as it does the striking of a bargain or the drawing up of a contract between people who are partners in some joint enterprise.

Macpherson pointed out that this principle requires those who can demand accountability to be themselves accountable to those who put them in the position of power. He concluded (p. 4) that,

The guardians of education in a democracy are, therefore, primarily responsible for the quality of accountability policies, and responsible to the stakeholders of public education.

For the purposes of this study, the definition of accountability that has been used is that of Kogan (1986, p. 25). The issues of the accountability of those who demand accountability was taken up by a Parliamentary Select Committee in their Second Report (2000, para. 9). The recommendation of the committee was that OFSTED should be held accountable by a board.

Accountability across the world

Macpherson (1996, p.8) identified the worldwide nature of the expansion of accountability in education and, like Kogan (1986), noted competing perspectives on accountability:

technical (managerialism), client (consumerism) and professional (professionalism). The tension that emerged in education systems across the world, and has since dominated educational debate, is which of these accountabilities should take precedence or should they have equal priority. In England it could be argued that what was begun by James Callaghan's Ruskin speech (Callaghan, 1987), then developed during the 18 years of Conservative Government and continued following the election of New Labour in 1997, was a combination of all three types of accountability. This tension is mirrored in the evolution and development of inspection and review processes found in all the countries commonly associated in the restructuring of education since the early 1980s such as Australia, New Zealand, USA, England and Scotland.

It was noted above that the Callaghan speech signalled the beginning of what was called 'The Great Debate' in England. The Labour Government, of which Callaghan was a member, interpreted educational accountability as public accountability in education (Macpherson 1996, p. 37). It was a political issue defined in terms of standards of achievement, curriculum content, participation by parents, and managerial responsibilities for schools. Educational goals had to be within the context of the needs of society, especially of business and industry. As a result, power and policy making shifted from the Department of Education and Science (DES) to central government, to the Cabinet office. This was true of many branches of state activity such as health (Hutton, 1996; Jenkins, 1996).

Drucker (1990, p. 92) noted that 'education, health care, productivity and policy making are political matters....every government is held accountable by its people for the performance of its institutions.' Further he suggested that it was imperative that managers in the new institutions should be able to give and receive knowledge. Schools would need to devise methods of deciding (Drucker, p. 208) 'what is information for them, that is, what data they need...to know what they're doing...to decide what they should be doing...and to appraise how well they are doing.' It could be argued that the OFSTED model of inspection is one Governmental mechanism for discharging this responsibility. As Drucker pointed out, (Drucker, p. 220) if management is important to today's society, managers have to face up to the fact that 'they represent power - and power has to be accountable, has to be legitimate.'

Similar tensions and a need for greater accountability were noted in Australia, particularly in Tasmania and New South Wales (Beare et al, 1989; Caldwell and Spinks, 1988, 1992 and Macpherson, 1996). Calls for overt links between the national expenditure on education and achievement were heard in the USA, following the report from the National Commission entitled *A Nation at Risk* and in New Zealand after the Picot Report (1989).

There was considerable unease and lack of support from teachers for many of the outcomes of the reforms in England during the years of the Thatcher government, particularly where judgements were being made about teacher performance at the classroom level. This was true of the other countries experiencing reform (Macpherson, 1996 p. 17).

For the purposes of this study the inspection or review systems of New Zealand, New South Wales (Australia), Kentucky (USA) and Scotland have been chosen as comparable accountability mechanisms with England. The systems of education in these countries have developed in a similar way to that of England since 1988. This is particularly true in areas such as policy development, site based management and accountability, for example. (Ball, 1994; Apple, 1996; Scribner and Layton, 1995; Macpherson, 1996; Crowson, Boyd and Mawhinney, 1996; Walter, 1996; Whitty et al, 1998; Whitty, 2000). It will be seen that the level to which the different systems have embraced comparable reforms has tempered the similarities. Variances noted include how much responsibility has been given to schools for issues like staffing and whether they have a delegated budget. The similarities and differences in systems of review or inspection are described briefly below.

New Zealand

The responsible body in New Zealand for school review or inspection for the last ten years has been the Education Review Office (ERO). It is a Government department whose purpose has been to report publicly on the education and care of students in schools and early childhood centres. ERO claimed that it influenced the decisions and choices of parents, teachers and other stakeholders at the individual school level and influenced Government policymaking. Over 10,000 requests were made by parents for copies of the reports in the year up to May 1999 (Aitken, 1999). The Chief Review

Officer of ERO has the power to initiate reviews, investigate, inspect, report and publish findings on the provision of education in New Zealand.

ERO carries out different types of reviews: accountability reviews; cluster reviews of educational institutions and services and national evaluations of education issues. Evaluation services are provided on a contractual basis.

During accountability reviews, ERO investigates and reports to schools' Boards of Trustees (the New Zealand equivalent of each school's Governing Body in the English system) and to the government on the quality of education provided for students in individual institutions. Reviews are scheduled on the basis of prior performance; appraisal of current risk and the time elapsed since the last review. A school may expect to be reviewed every three to four years but if low quality or health and safety matters were perceived to be issues in the past, this may be more frequent. These reports have been freely available to the public since 1997 and can be found upon the ERO's website as well as in hard copy. The ERO claims (ERO, 2001) that the final written report is a useful tool for the board of trustees, assisting them and the principal in making decisions where there is an area of concern. Shepherd (personal communication, 2001) contests this claim, as there is no financial support offered to Trustees from the government to help them implement change. Neither is there any imperative upon teachers to change teaching and learning methodologies. The national guidelines on curriculum are open to wide interpretation by teachers. Teachers may be

criticised but are not helped to change. No evidence base of data from student outcomes is shared with the school community.

Cluster reviews are undertaken by ERO from time to time. These look at groups of schools or areas with common features. Examples of reports have been of schools in one geographic area or a report on the achievement of boys. Contract evaluations are at the behest of the Ministry of Education. Evaluation reports inspired by ERO are based upon inspection evidence and evaluate specific issues chosen by the ERO.

ERO officers work to a set of evaluation criteria when undertaking an accountability review. They plan the focus of the review from the documentation provided by the school (operational information such as the school's development plan and self-review data), the completed self-review questionnaire and information about student achievement. During their time at the school, review officers will talk to trustees, staff and students, read and analyse school documentation and observe teaching in the classroom. The resulting written report contains recommendations and a time frame for the next review. A summary is distributed to parents after the board of trustees has seen the full report. It is notable that the student achievement data is not released into the public domain.

Given the development of similar policies for school review or inspection systems noted above in New Zealand and England, it is interesting that ERO's supporting guidelines for undertaking school self-review (ERO, 2000) include a reference to an English self

review document published by OFSTED (OFSTED, 1998). Unlike England, New Zealand does not publish national outcomes data (examination results) at the school level so there can be no 'league tables' or direct comparisons of schools. Aitken, (1999, p. 12), the then Chief Executive of ERO, advised against dealing only with impressions rather than evidence. She noted, "We risk students' growth... because we do not have good information about whether our expectations [of the system] are being met."

She then listed five types of information still unavailable to ERO and schools that she felt would progress the system and protect the students from complacency inherent in it. In her view, the information needed included: school level information for teachers and principals; information for all stakeholders that could compare students' achievement; information for evaluative purposes; information to support planning and self-review; and, information for external concerns such as teacher educators.

USA: Kentucky

Kentucky is a state that experiences high levels of adult illiteracy (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/1028424.stm>) but whilst it has one of the highest levels of racial integration in the USA in its schools, funding lacked equality. A lawsuit brought by the Coalition for Better Education (CBE) in 1988 representing approximately 60 of Kentucky's 176 school districts successfully forced the state to redesign its funding mechanisms. The resulting Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 formed the

basis for holistic change in the state's educational system. It called for top-down and bottom-up systemic change in finance, governance, curriculum, and assessment.

KERA established six goals for the schools of Kentucky. Schools had to:

- attain high levels of achievement through setting high expectations for students,
- develop the abilities of all students in six cognitive areas,
- increase school attendance rates,
- reduce dropout and retention rates,
- reduce physical and mental health barriers to learning,
- increase the proportion of students who made a successful transition to work, further study, training or joined the armed services.

The Kentucky Instructional Results Information System (KIRIS) came into effect almost immediately as required by the Act. Kentucky needed an assessment system capable of measuring progress toward the goals, especially the academic expectations reflected in the first two goals. An external contractor was hired by the state to create, develop and manage the KIRIS system.

The assessment components of the KIRIS were drawn up through a consultative process involving all phases of education in the state, including the Kentucky Department of Education. The 'KIRIS assessment' has been operating since the spring of 1992, and has included three types of tasks. In grades 5, 8 and 12 students put

together a portfolio in maths and writing. Teachers mark these and report results to the Department for inclusion in what is known as 'the accountability assessment'. The second task is a written test. The third task is a multiple-choice test that is machine-scorable. The score contributes to the accountability assessment and along with test one data and quantitative data such as school attendance and numbers of students, who transfer into work, training or the armed services, becomes part of the School Accountability Index. The School Accountability Index allocates schools to one of five categories: Eligible for Reward, Successful, Improving, In Decline and In Crisis. The basis of their allocation to a category is scores achieved by students in set tests and also from portfolios of work.

Both were found to be unreliable and a number of schools, particularly small ones, could have been assigned to the wrong category.

(<http://vocserve.berkeley.edu/abstracts/MDS-946/MDS-946-Appendi-2.html>)

Differences in sampling year on year perpetuated and deepened the potential for error.

Each school in Kentucky is working toward an 'improvement goal' (Ysseldyke et al., 1996). A school receives a financial reward to be spent in any way agreed upon by the majority of its staff if its accountability index is more than 1 point above their goal. If the school is above the improvement goal, but by less than 1 point, the school is not eligible for a reward. If the School Accountability Index is below the goal, the school receives assistance from the Department. The first time a school does not achieve its goal, it must develop a school improvement plan, and receives some funds to support these

improvements. The second time a school does not perform at its goal, it is designated a 'school in decline'. A 'master' teacher is allocated to the school. If the school fails to reach its improvement goal a third time, it is declared a 'school in crisis' and may be taken over by the state with resultant changes in staff. A school can go into 'decline' or be declared a 'school in crisis' if scores are 5 marks below those set in the improvement goal. Where this happened or where the scores were perceived to be unfair or incorrect, Principals of schools came under huge pressure, some resigned or were removed (personal communication with Kentucky principals).

School scores are the scores of crucial interest to the public in Kentucky (Yssledyke et al, 1997). The scores are reported at four levels and include all students, even those with severe special educational need. The levels of attainment are judged as distinguished, proficient, apprentice, and novice and are assessed by teachers and receive a score. The levels are applied to all areas of the curriculum as well as the tests and include the quantitative data for attendance for example, mentioned above. All the scores for an individual school are aggregated and a complex formula is applied to give a school's actual score. The information about the schools' performance on the Accountability Index is published.

As expected, over years, the Kentucky Department of Education is refining the work being done to support teachers and schools in their work towards achieving the goals in their School Accountability Index. It is also adding assessments to the range being undertaken, assessment tasks involving performance events are to be incorporated.

Since 1996 an added impetus to reform and accountability in the USA has been the so-called Title 1 legislation. This is a national funding initiative for which the individual States have to adopt challenging content standards in academic subjects as well as high standards for student performance (National Academy of Education, 1996); it has resulted from the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994). For their additional funding States have to demonstrate that they are setting standards which will show what children are expected to know and be able to do. Standards must cover rigorous content and encourage the teaching of basic and advanced skills. Also performance standards must be aligned with the state's content standards. States must set three levels of performance, proficient, advanced and partially proficient. All States in receipt of Title 1 funds had to introduce assessment procedures either of their own or from another state to track yearly student progress towards the standards. Kentucky was highlighted as an example of good practice in the report of 1996 (National Academy of Education, 1996).

Scotland

From November 2000, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education (HMIE) in Scotland became an Executive Agency, accountable to the Scottish Executive, the devolved government in Scotland. In a press release the Minister for Education (McConnell, 2000) said that reform was necessary to clarify the role of the Inspectorate, The inspection function of the HMI will become an Executive Agency. This will allow operational impartiality in inspections to be combined with direct accountability to

Ministers. Ministers will be able to set a policy framework for the inspection process which is vital if we are to support our aims for the education system...the Inspectorate should no longer have the lead role in the development and implementation of new policies for the curriculum.

These changes were with immediate effect and showed yet again the need of government to control affairs directly, Mrs Thatcher's government did so and the Blair government has continued with the policy (see below).

The mission statement of HMIE says that it will, 'promote improvements in standards, quality and attainment in Scottish education through first-hand evaluation' (Scottish Executive, 2001). The inspectorate believes that through independent inspections, reviews and public reporting on educational establishments, community based learning and the operations of local authorities it will enhance continuous improvement in the quality of education and raising standards of attainment. The HMIE has a charter that promises an inspection and review service that is efficient and of high quality. As in the New Zealand and English systems it further offers a contractual evaluation service and professional advice to government ministers. It remains to be seen what difference the changes in control and accountability will bring about.

As of 2001, HMIE undertakes a range of inspections: departmental, extended, special school, standards and quality, and two types of care and welfare inspections. Unlike England all inspections are carried out by HMI, none are contracted out as in the

OFSTED inspection system. A departmental inspection is a national examination of one area within a sample of schools. In each department the report comments upon: parents' views; operational matters; the quality of courses; the quality and effectiveness of management and the departmental ethos. The quality of teaching and learning and student achievements will also be commented upon. As in the New Zealand example the report is published and highlights key strengths and recommendations for improvement.

Similarly an extended inspection will take the same elements to be commented upon, adding how students with special needs are supported; it is undertaken within one institution. Special school inspections include elements to evaluate the use of specialised aids to learning and the involvement of parents and carers.

The care and welfare inspections are related to pastoral issues and pursue issues of: involvement of and communication with, parents; Personal and Social Education; support for students; and the quality of relationships within the school.

The inspections of standards and quality include elements of all the others. The views of pupils are more in evidence but a limited number of subject areas are included. As in all the HMIE inspections the key strengths are highlighted, main points for action are identified and the reports are published.

Unlike the standard format of the New Zealand report, there are few mentions of the School Board in the final report of HMIE and little mention of school self-review

processes. The Scottish example appears more of a top-down process resembling the OFSTED model prior to 1997 (OFSTED, 1997).

Australia: New South Wales

The New South Wales Department of Education and Training pronounced in its document entitled 'School Accountability and Improvement in New South Wales Public Schools' (1998) that, from 1997, improvement in the education provided in public schools would be enhanced by the schools' involvement in a new process of evaluation and reporting to the community. The process was in three stages: self-evaluation by the school in association with one of the department's officers; production of an annual report by the school for parents; and the community and in-depth reviews to be carried out at some schools.

The annual report has four parts to it: introduction, school features, school performance information, and school improvement targets. The school, using the Department's guidance and working with a representative from the Department, publishes these reports. A larger review document produced for a sample of schools across the state uses the same headings but gives more detail, particularly in the sections about performance and areas for improvement. Based on information gathered from the self-evaluation or from other information available to the Department, it chooses the focus areas for the review. A review team is established which has both internal and external members. External team members are chosen for their expertise in the focus areas of

the review. A senior member of the Department leads each review but other members of the team can be drawn from elsewhere in the state.

School based team members are nominated by the principal and staff in consultation with the school community. They may include staff, parents and in secondary school, students. The review is carried out according to state guidelines. The key findings, initial conclusions and implications are shared with the school at the end of the review. The Departmental officer, the principal and the district superintendent determine recommendations for improvement. A report is prepared including the recommendations and disseminated at the behest of the Director General. The school provides the community with the key findings and the recommendations for improvement. The Principal is responsible for ensuring progress towards improvement. It is monitored, evaluated and reported on for parents in the annual report.

The tone of both the annual report and the review is overwhelmingly positive. The annual report begins with a resume of the school's significant achievements over the past year and may include awards that have been given to teachers as well as the school's achievements in sports, drama and competitions for example.

England: The development, role and effectiveness of OFSTED

The development and role of OFSTED

In the Education Reform Act of 1988 (DFE) a number of accountability mechanisms were introduced into the English educational system by the Conservative Government (see Table 7, page 79). The only significant change in the arrangements for schools since the election of the New Labour government of 1997 has been the opportunity for schools to 'opt out' of Local Education Authority (LEA) control, that is to become Grant Maintained (GM). The Blair government has returned GM schools to LEA control but has allowed them to retain much of the autonomy they had enjoyed.

The accountability mechanisms that were brought in by the conservative government in 1988 are summarised in Table 7.

In 1992 school accountability in the form of inspection was announced in the Education (Schools) Act (see Table 8, page 81). The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) was given the responsibility for inspection under the supervision of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI). The accountability processes plus the responsibility for inspection were devolved to the institutional level.

Table 7 The Education Reform Act (DFE, 1988) and accountability
(after Macpherson, 1996, p. 51)

Area	Changes	Accountability mechanisms
Curriculum	Introduced National Curriculum of Core subjects (mathematics, English, religious education, science), Foundation subjects (history, geography, technology, music, art, physical education, modern foreign languages) and cross curricular themes such as economic awareness	Attainment targets at the end of four Key Stages. Students are tested at age 7, 11, 14 and 16 League tables of results are published at the end of Key Stage 2 and 5 i.e. at age 11 and 16
Finance	udgets delegated to school Governing Bodies from Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Governing Bodies may delegate to Headteachers. Schools have power to raise finance, charges and provide services.	Government control of funding mechanisms. Governing Body and Headteacher prepare and monitor budgets. Accounts published through Annual report to parents Competitive tendering for all school services such as grounds' maintenance and school meals.

Area	Changes	Accountability mechanisms
Competition	Schools encouraged to 'opt out' of LEA control with additional funding from central government. Marketing of state schools and introduction of competition between schools through use of 'League tables' for example.	School rolls rise or fall upon public perceptions of school success or failure
Additional	Annual publication of school based data such as attendance rates, post school routes, numbers of first choice preferences for the school, school policies, budgetary information and open enrolment	Formulaic Annual Report for Parents, Parents' Annual General Meeting with Governors and the headteacher, open access to school documentation. System wide comparisons between schools.

The accountability, responsibility and 'blame' (Vann, 1994), associated with the accountability processes became a dominant part of the government's drive to 'shame' schools that were failing and potentially to close them. The early OFSTED inspections were a 'snapshot' of the school's effectiveness and whether there was value for money for taxpayers. Inspection reports were publicly available to all stakeholders of a school: parents, governors, students, teachers and the wider community.

The process has evolved significantly from being a totally received activity; one that was ‘done’ to schools as described in the Inspection Framework (DFEE, 1992) to a process, which involves a level of participation by schools (DFEE, 1997 and 2001).

The Callaghan speech at Ruskin College in 1976 began the Great Debate about education and educational standards in recent times but it has never been concluded. In an address at Ruskin College by the then ‘shadow’ Prime Minister Tony Blair (16 December, 1996) reminded his audience of Callaghan’s speech highlighting ‘standards, accountability and the relationship between schools, industry and parents’.

However he said ‘standards are not good enough and in international terms we are falling behind’, which was the oft-heard mantra of the Conservative government of the 1980s and 1990s.

Table 8 The Education (Schools) Act (1992) and accountability issues (after Macpherson, 1996, p. 68)

Agency	Accountability mechanism	Forms of accountability
Her Majesty’s Inspectorate	The former HMIs took over the role of supervisors and trainers of the new independent inspection service. Chief Inspector (HMCI) appointed to regulate school inspections, devise training programmes, select and register	National, public and formative evaluation becomes summative, localised and political accountability.

Agency	Accountability mechanism	Forms of accountability
	inspectors, provide guidance for schools and inspectors on the inspection process and monitor inspections.	
Office for Standards In Education (OFSTED)	<p>LEA advisory and inspection services changed their role partially into performance monitoring but also to producing information to support schools' own monitoring and evaluation processes.</p> <p>OFSTED identifies institutions to be inspected, invites tenders from registered inspectors and commissions inspections.</p>	Political accountability in terms of quality of schools' provision, standards achieved and value for money (financial management)
Schools	Audited self-evaluation changed into inspections every four years. Schools and Governing Bodies provide data and contextual information. Inspection teams are led by a Registered Inspector and include a Lay Inspector. Detailed written reports are submitted to OFSTED and published in full. Action plan written by the Governing Body and published.	Local public accountability according to criteria in the Framework and Guidance documents from DFEE, including open public meeting for parents, a parental questionnaire and classroom observations. Intense external scrutiny and judgement based upon a snapshot of the school. Actions post inspection reported through the Governing Body meetings and the Annual General Meeting for parents.

Even after twenty years of systemic change and prescription from central government Blair identified that English schools were still under performing and failing in some

instances. He established his aims for a Labour government that actually came to power in May 1997 as 'zero tolerance of school underperformance and still more urgently school failure.' He promised a series of measures that offered teachers pressure as well as support: improvement plans, performance criteria, enhanced advice and inspection, mandatory qualification for school leaders, summer schools for literacy, school closure for persistent underperformance and potential job loss as a result.

Further he promised early intervention for failing schools:

At present, the ultimate sanction for a school is that it fails an OFSTED inspection. The school is then identified for 'special measures' and the LEA must prepare an action plan for improvement. But this all happens too late. School failure is an educational catastrophe. We need to be able to intervene early with sufficient power to stop the spiral of decline.

Tony Blair reminded his audience that the teaching profession had reacted 'defensively' to the Callaghan speech. He offered support to teachers but also promised that the small number of 'incompetent' teachers would leave the profession more swiftly. It was an uncompromising speech that underlined the importance of OFSTED's role within a context of a government that was seeking to celebrate success in schools judged against, for the most part raw, outcome based data.

Commenting upon the role of government, Blair said that the Prime Minister, soon to be himself, must maintain a personal interest; the status of education would be higher than ever before, there would be 'an unrelenting focus on standards.'

Education accountability directed by central government rather than at the school or district level was clear and the role of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) was strengthened.

Table 9, above, outlines the Framework for Continuous Improvement as detailed by Michael Barber, one of Tony Blair's major educational advisors.

The significant difference referred to by Barber in the Framework for Continuous Improvement is the need for continued support of teachers who are engaging in the change the government wants to see. In this respect, OFSTED changed to become more developmental and informative for schools in their efforts to achieve improvement and raise standards (Tomlinson, M. 2001). This was a change in approach.

**Table 9 Framework for Continuous Improvement,
(Barber, M. 31 May 2000, Washington, DC)**

AMBITIOUS STANDARDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High standards set out in the National Curriculum • National Tests at age 7, 11, 14, 16 • Detailed teaching programmes based on best practice • Optional World Class Tests based on the best 10 per cent in the 1995 TIMSS *
DEVOLVED RESPONSIBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School as unit of accountability • Devolution of resources and employment powers to schools • Pupil-led formula funding • Open enrolment
GOOD DATA/CLEAR TARGETS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual pupil level data collected nationally • Analysis of performance in national tests • Benchmark data annually for every school • Comparisons to all other schools with similar intake • Statutory target-setting at district and school level
ACCESS TO BEST PRACTICE AND QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal professional development in national priorities (literacy, numeracy, ICT) • Leadership development as an entitlement • Standards Site [http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk] • Beacon Schools • LEA (district) responsibility • Devolved funding for professional development at school level • Reform of education research
ACCOUNTABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National inspection system for schools and LEAs (districts) • Every school inspected every 4-6 years • All inspection reports published • Publication annually of school/district level performance data and targets
INTERVENTION IN	For successful schools

INVERSE PROPORTION TO SUCCESS (Rewards, Assistance, Consequences)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beacon status • celebration events • recognition • school achievement awards scheme • greater autonomy
	For all schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • post-inspection action plan • school improvement grant to assist implementation of action plan • monitoring of performance by LEA (district)
	For underperforming schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more prescriptive action plan • possible withdrawal of devolved budget and responsibility • national and LEA monitoring of performance • additional funding to assist turn round (but only for practical improvement measures)
	For failing schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as for underperforming schools plus • early consideration of closure • district plan for school with target date for completing turn round (maximum 2 years) • national monitoring three times a year • possible fresh start or city academy
	For failing LEAs (districts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intervention from central government • possible contracting out of functions to the private sector

* Third International Mathematics and Science Study

The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) came into being in England in 1993 as a result of the Education (Schools) Act (1992). OFSTED is a non-ministerial government department and is responsible for inspection of every school in England. The OFSTED system followed a system of school inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) that could be said to have been random and in some ways benign. Most schools at that time were not inspected; Headteachers were reported to be antagonistic to the idea of inspection and many teachers had never seen an inspector in their school during long teaching careers (Macpherson, 1996 p. 43).

Table 9, page 84 outlines the accountability measures that were introduced alongside the new system of inspection. The Department for Education (DFE) published 'Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools' in 1992. Inspection of schools was outlined (p. 16) thus:

There will be regular inspection of all maintained schools. Under the Education (Schools) Act 1992, an independent inspection of the quality of teaching and the standards achieved in all maintained schools will be made every four years. This will lead to a published report highlighting strengths and weaknesses. Schools will have to publish a plan of action to tackle the weaknesses identified by the inspectors and report on progress to parents every year.

Thus OFSTED was born. The key features of OFSTED inspection in 1993 are shown in Table 6, page 46 where the key changes to the process are detailed.

There are similarities with the inspection systems of Scotland and New Zealand as described above but in neither case is the volume of detail and bureaucracy demanded of the individual institution as great.

Teachers and headteachers reacted fearfully, perceiving threat in the inspection process. Schools were also resentful at the use of raw data (league tables of examination results) and the lack of opportunity to use inspection for school development. No conversation with the inspection team was allowed in the first phase of OFSTED's development. Clegg and Billington (1994, p. 2) reported:

The purpose [of inspection by OFSTED] is not to support and advise, it is to collect a range of evidence, match the evidence against a statutory set of criteria, arrive at judgments and make those judgements known to the public. Put bluntly, OFSTED inspections are not designed to help individual schools to do a better job, they are designed to come to a judgement about the quality of the job, which they are currently doing.

Clegg and Billington (1994, p. 103) identified the major weakness with the process, as it then existed as:

Schools have the potential to use inspection as part of a longer term process of review and development. If inspection is to assist with that, it is important that schools are positive in their approach and proactive in how it is managed.

Unfortunately this was not how OFSTED was viewed and the early experience of OFSTED shared anecdotally between teachers and Headteachers reinforced their anxieties and animosity (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7). The OFSTED process changed between 1993 and 2000 (see Table 6 page 46). By 2000/1 OFSTED's area of influence and remit for Inspections had grown considerably to include every phase and type of state funded and independent education from nursery to tertiary provision but also including the inspection of Initial Teacher Training, Local Education Authorities and home schooling.

The organisation's divisions cover the operational aspects of inspection and advice to central government, local authorities and individual schools. The statistics produced emanate from one of the largest databases in the world.

By 2001, the role of HMI related to reporting best practice and writing guidance for schools and ministers from inspection evidence. There was no direct inspectorial role for HMI in schools except to monitor the quality of OFSTED's work.

The original format of the inspection process changed over time partially as a result of the work of the government's House of Commons Select Committee on Education and Employment. The Select Committee receives an annual report from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI), Chris Woodhead between 1994 and 2001. Annually the HMCI is questioned upon the report and recommendations from the committee are largely incorporated into OFSTED's work (Select Committee on Education and Employment, 1999).

It was inevitable that as the political complexion of the Select committee changed, [Select Committee composition is at the behest of the ruling party from the Conservative Thatcher government with a large majority, through the Major government with a very small, but Conservative, majority, to a New Labour Blair government again with a very large majority] so too would the direction that OFSTED was being given from central government. This may be of tone more than substance as the Blair government is equally supportive of the principles of inspection as defined in the OFSTED Framework (see above, Blair, 1996).

Interestingly, the report by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education and Employment proposed that HMCI should be accountable himself to a Board.

(<http://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200001/cmselect/cmeduemp/294/29405.htm>)

Research on OFSTED's Effectiveness

The tensions in the OFSTED process that emerged during this study (see Chapter 5 and 6) in the case study schools replicate the tensions documented in research undertaken by Kogan and Maden (1999). Kogan and Maden's research indicated a lack of confidence among head teachers, governors and parents in the credibility of the OFSTED process itself, that both teaching staff and head teachers felt that standards could be adversely affected due to stress and decline in motivation [during and after inspection], that the management model promoted by OFSTED was out-dated, that there was an intolerance [from OFSTED] of alternative approaches even where these could be seen to be effective and that, "All heads and teachers from the case study schools felt inspection should be a more supportive, developmental process" (Kogan and Maden, 1999, p. 100).

Perhaps, unfairly, these problems became associated with the personality of the HMCI and his style of leadership often seen as confrontational (Education and Employment Committee, Fourth report, Parliamentary session 1998-99).

The government took steps to reframe the policy context of OFSTED's role by including Michael Barber in a role developing national policy as the Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. In his speech to a teachers' quality meeting for the Smith Richardson Foundation in Washington DC in May 2000 (Barber, 2000), he published a Framework for Continuous Improvement in schools in which

accountability is one of six dimensions, see the earlier Table 9 (page 84). Accountability is described as: a national inspection system for all schools and LEAs; every school inspected every four to six years; publication of all inspection reports and annual publication of school and LEA level performance data and targets. Additionally, under the heading Devolved Responsibility a school is defined as a 'unit of accountability'. In this it can be seen that the OFSTED mantra of 'Improvement through Inspection' and accountability were still fundamental planks of UK government strategy as England completed its first decade of detailed inspection as an accountability mechanism. It is clear from the importance and responsibility given to OFSTED that both Conservative and New Labour governments believe that OFSTED is an effective accountability mechanism, although some would offer cautions (Tabberer, 1995; Macpherson et al, 1998; Earley, 1998; Tooley, 1998; Thrupp, 1998; Hopkins et al, 1999; Kogan and Maden, 1999; Ferguson et al, 2000; Bassey, 2001; Shaw et al, 2003).

In an account in the Education Guardian (Woodward, 2001, p. 46), the new HMCI, Mike Tomlinson, was reported to be more conciliatory towards teachers and inspection. He was quoted as saying,

I think there is a need to look again at the inspection system, not to take any of the rigour or proper challenge out of that process but to ensure that it's done with schools, not to schools... The new system would involve taking more account of data collected by schools on staff performance and management. Inspection has to ask itself how it fits

into that different environment...I don't support OFSTED pulling back entirely. There is a need for an external objective look at the performance of schools by those not involved deeply in any shape or form in running the school

OFSTED entered another period of change and the tone that was set for inspections from April 2001 under the new HMCI was no less rigorous than before but appeared less hostile to teachers and schools.

Conclusion

This chapter has pursued the research question about the effectiveness of OFSTED as an accountability mechanism. It has described briefly the context of the systemic change processes that were prevalent in the education systems of the largely English-speaking world at the time of OFSTED's inception and more recently.

Accountability and effectiveness were defined and significant changes that resulted from the pursuance of school level accountability were tracked, beginning in the late 1970s, in Australia (New South Wales), New Zealand, England, the USA (Kentucky) and Scotland.

The role and development of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) in England was described chronologically from 1992 to the present and compared with the work of the Education Review Office of New Zealand; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland; the review activities of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training and the Kentucky Department for Education Kentucky School Accountability Index.

The validity and tone of the OFSTED inspection process has been called into question and the data interpretation contested. A tentative conclusion about OFSTED's effectiveness as an accountability mechanism has been drawn together, comparing OFSTED with available information on other systems sampled. Some research has found the OFSTED process wanting. Further evidence is offered in chapters 5 and 6 below. However evidence has also been offered in this chapter suggesting that whole school inspection can lead to school improvement. This is discussed further in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

In Chapter 4 the methodology used in this study is described. The chapter highlights the methodological difficulties encountered and suggests the limits that exist to qualitative research of this nature.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

In Chapter 3 it was shown that accountability remains a problematic concept internationally. The OFSTED process, in particular, begged the two research questions:

- How effective is the OFSTED process as an accountability mechanism?
- Does whole school inspection lead to school improvement?

As a practitioner, the researcher took the view that she could simultaneously investigate these two questions, improve her own leadership services to her school, and improve her knowledge by undertaking this study. She used a reflective approach, responding to Macpherson's (1987, pp.19-20) advice:

I consider it important that educational administrators hold an educative ideology by becoming better learners ... administrators who are themselves competent researchers, will have knowledge and ability to evaluate research, and be able to rely on good research in their decision making. Learning and applying the criteria of scholarly research and argument are therefore held to be crucial philosophical tools of educative administration.

The study made extensive use of qualitative ethnographic methods. It proceeded aware of the potential difficulties attached to using such methods where the researcher is also the headteacher of one of the case study schools. As Janesick (1994, p. 212) said:

Qualitative researchers accept the fact that research is ideologically driven. There is no value-free or bias-free design. The qualitative researcher early on identifies his or her biases and articulates the ideology or conceptual frame for the study ... we continually raise awareness of our own biases. There is no attempt to pretend that research is value-free.

The researcher was committed to discovering and interpreting the 'reality' of OFSTED inspection as experienced by those in schools. Young (1997, p. 111) said:

... the image of the educational researcher that emerges is one of an engaged practitioner, involved as both change partner at local level and policy partner at wider levels – both a specific, local intellectual...and an inter-context, political intellectual at state and national levels.

Hence the inspection of four schools by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) was investigated by interviewing the headteachers of the schools. One of these schools was researched in greater detail by using additional participant observation and interviewing over a period of three years.

This chapter will outline and justify the methods used in the study. The issues addressed will include:

- the qualitative ethnographic and subjectivist approach used;
- developing case studies, interviews, participant observation and documentary analysis;
- ethical considerations and dilemmas, potential personal and political problems as a source of bias;
- data collection and treatment; and,
- reliability and validity.

The chapter concludes with reflections on the limits to interpretation. In sum, although evidence was collected to triangulate for validity, reliability and dependability (Burns, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1988), it is not claimed that transferability of the research outcomes can occur (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). The sample size does not allow generalisation beyond the four sites but the patterns to the evidence will be shown to warrant serious policy concern.

A qualitative ethnographic and subjectivist approach

Given its purposes, a qualitative ethnographic approach was chosen. Ethnography is defined as 'writing about people' (Burns, 1995 p. 245) where the people are the experts in what the ethnographer is researching. This requires, as Vidich and Lyman (1994, p. 23) put it:

Qualitative ethnographic research ... [which in turn] ... entails an attitude of detachment toward society that permits the sociologist to observe the conduct of self and others, to understand the mechanisms of social processes, and to comprehend and explain why both actors and processes are as they are.

The purpose of ethnographic research in education is to, 'uncover social, cultural or normative patterns' (Burns, 1995 p. 247). The descriptive writing typical of ethnography allows evaluation of schools as cultural entities to be undertaken. As a process it has been described as, 'the science of cultural description'. Ethnology in this study includes qualitative and interpretative issues as discussed in the literature (p. 246).

This approach assumes that school life takes place within a social and political context. People have webs of belief, values, suppositions, anticipations and interests that can be described but, less easily, quantified. Qualitative ethnography is often used therefore to describe the situations from which policies can be proposed, as in this study. However while the credibility of ethnographic methods in educational research has become increasingly evident, concerns have grown that quantitative data can miss important links and relationships within an educative process.

Given the complexity of school situations outlined above, the researcher must be aware of a need for sensitivity, to be flexible, and to respond to emerging ideas. Merriam (1988, p. 53) went on to outline the characteristics of qualitative ethnographic methods:

If the researcher's theoretical orientation is naturalistic or qualitative, his or her research would be characterised by the following: natural settings, humans as primary data-gathering instruments, use of tacit knowledge, qualitative methods, purposive sampling, inductive data analysis, grounded theory, emergent design, negotiated outcomes, case-study reporting mode, idiographic interpretation, tentative application of findings, focus-determined boundaries, and special criteria for trustworthiness.

Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) added to these features of ethnographic research working with unstructured data, the investigation of a small number of cases, maybe even one, and the analysis of data that is mainly verbal descriptions and explanations.

The justification for a qualitative ethnographic approach to this study can now be summarised. Following the advice identified above, the study attempts to understand and interpret social action in the case study schools, emphasises qualitative ethnographic process, investigates the schools in a naturalist context and as entities, assumes that there are multiple perspectives, and uses multiple techniques.

A second major influence on the approach selected for this study was the writing of Tom Greenfield, particularly his explanations of science versus experience. He argued, (Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993, pp. 249-250) that,

We all exist within our own phenomenological reality that is our experience. It is a great resource, it is irreducible and it is not to be summed up in statistical and general propositions. The important point about experience is what we think we know about it and how we come to understand it ... I would argue that while experience may not in and of itself be sufficient to understand reality, it is a crucial building block for such an understanding. Any worthwhile explanations of social reality must not contradict that experience. It may reinterpret it but it must not contradict it. This is the perspective of phenomenology, the perspective of the first hand, the perspective of the subjectivist.

From this standpoint, a virtue of subjectivist research conducted by a headteacher of a school being inspected is its credibility. Similarly, with regard to validity, Marshall and Rossman (1995, p. 143) noted that,

The strength of the qualitative study aims to explore a problem, describe a setting, a process, a social group or a pattern of interaction to establish validity. An in-depth description showing the complexities of variables and interactions will be so embedded with data derived from the setting that it cannot help but be valid. Within the parameters of that setting, population and theoretical framework the research will be valid.

Developing case studies

The research involved making case studies of four schools conducted over a period of three years, 1995-98. Case study methods provide anecdotal evidence that illustrate more general findings but are also unique cases which are inherently interesting in their own right. Some elements of the study are historical, depending heavily on records, documents and interviews; some observational, focusing on a particular group of people and involving participant observation and some situational analysis, where particular events are a feature (Burns 1994, pp. 314-316).

A case study is 'an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a programme, an event, a person, a process, an institution or a social group' (Merriam 1988, p. 9). It must be a 'bounded system, an entity in itself ... [it] must involve the collection of very extensive data to produce understanding of the entity being studied' (Burns p. 313). Merriam (1988, p. 173) warned,

One selects a case study approach because one wishes to understand the particular in depth, not because one wants to know what is generally true of many.

Four types of case study are noted by Merriam: the descriptive (relying heavily on thick description), particularistic (focusing on a particular event), heuristic (illuminating the reader's understanding of the phenomenon being studied) and inductive (relying upon

inductive reasoning). She outlined the characteristics of qualitative case studies that were identified by other researchers. These characteristics are summarised in Table 10.

Table 10 Characteristics of Qualitative Case Studies (Merriam, 1988)

Guba and Lincoln (1981)	Helmstadter (1970)	Hoaglin and others (1982)	Stake (1981)	Wilson (1979)
'Thick' description	Can be used to remedy or improve practice	Specificity	Inductive	Particularistic
Grounded	Results are hypotheses	Description of parties & motives	Multiplicity of data	Holistic
Holistic and lifelike	Design is flexible	Description of key issues	Descriptive	Longitudinal
Conversation-style format	Can be applied to troubled situations	Can suggest solutions	Specific	Qualitative
Illuminates meaning			Heuristic	
Builds on tacit knowledge				

The case study methods used in this research had some of the elements of each type noted by Merriam but most closely replicated the characteristics listed by Guba and Lincoln. Each technique used in the case study is now discussed.

Interview

Interviews have been described as ‘a conversation with a purpose’ (Merriam 1988, p. 72). Conversations with headteachers and leaders of the school communities are an

example of elite interviewing. Marshall and Rossman (1995, p. 83) considered such interviewees as 'the influential, the prominent and the well-informed people in an organisation'. Advantages of interviewing the 'elite' were said to include that they are 'able to provide an overall view of an organisation'. Disadvantages were noted as accessibility and the wish for 'an active interplay with the interviewer'. In this study the fact that the researcher was of a similar status may have averted active interplay with colleague headteachers, diverting attention from the interview, but there was evidence of it in the interviews with non-headteachers. A careful review of transcripts suggested that interplay was not a source of bias.

Interviews were seen as an effective method of exploring the beliefs, values, attitudes and cognitive processes of the respondents. It is necessary to interview when (Merriam, 1988 p. 72),

We cannot observe behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them ... [or] when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate.

Interviewees can also provide important insights and identify other sources of evidence for case studies. Hence, Merriam (1988) and Marshall and Rossman (1995) argued that the first stage of interviewing should be relatively unstructured. In this study these were usually open-ended and conversational in tone. Advantages of this type of interviewing include that a large amount of information can be given to the researcher

relatively quickly, and it allows her to probe further into an idea that may not have been anticipated prior to the event.

Disadvantages of unstructured interviews include the researcher being at the behest of the interviewee. A level of interpersonal sophistication is also needed to keep the interview to task. The researcher has to be able to keep a view of how the perceptions of the interviewee may relate to the perceptions of others; they might or might not cohere.

In this study, open-ended, unstructured interviews were used first (1995-1996) leading to semi-structured interviews in 1998. The researcher's prior experience, and the information that emerged during the conversation, guided the unstructured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were guided by a set of questions but neither the exact wording nor the order of questions was predetermined.

Participant observation and documentary analysis

According to Merriam (1988, p. 89) observation is,

...the best technique to use when an activity, event or situation can be observed firsthand, when a fresh perspective is desired, or when participants are not willing to discuss the topic under study.

Observation is also the appropriate technique when participants cannot discuss the topic, rather than that they are unwilling to do so (as in school A during the inspection period). Observations from September to December 1995 were intense, daily and interactive. From January 1996 onwards they became less frequent and stopped altogether in November 1998.

Participant observation in this study followed the patterns suggested by Burns (1995, pp. 320-321) and Adler and Adler, (1994, pp. 377-382). The names of participants, the setting and the purpose of the meeting were all recorded. Participants knew that they were being observed and that notes were being taken. Nobody withdrew or objected but the researcher was careful not to jeopardise the study or the inspection process by becoming confused about the agenda and purpose of each meeting. At times, therefore, no notes were taken.

The literature advises that the researcher role should remain subordinate to that of participant (Merriam, 1988). It is rare for the researcher to be a participant, as was the case in School A. As headteacher of the school, the researcher had to take a lead part in the discussions and process of inspection. It was critically important, therefore, to triangulate the data that was collected. This was done through written records, taken by others who were present, and by verbally cross-referencing their perceptions of the meetings in informal conversation and through documents that appeared later, such as transcriptions of feedback sessions with Inspectors. As the researcher was having to fulfil this dual role it is unlikely that she affected the meetings for the purposes of the

study, a disadvantage of participant observation noted by both Merriam (1988, p. 95) and Burns (1994, p. 320).

A variety of documents was used both as a source of information in their own right but also as triangulation with data from interviews and participant observation. Documents used included letters, agendas, transcripts of interviews, minutes from meetings, OFSTED reports, computer logs, newspaper reports, published materials and handwritten notes, from members of staff from School A in particular. It was remembered that these may not have been free of bias, may have been inaccurate or written for a specific audience or purpose outside the research.

Ethical considerations and dilemmas as potential sources of bias

The research proposal was submitted to the University of Tasmania Ethics committee and was accepted by them, subject to the normal constraints now described briefly.

Individuals who were interviewed or who contributed materials were asked to read the research outline and sign the form required by the University of Tasmania Ethics committee. All transcripts were checked with the respondents for errors of fact or meaning. Whenever possible, triangulation was sought from others who had been present or from associated documentation.

Given the complexity of the relationships in one of the case study schools (A), particular ethical care was exercised. Bibby (1997, p. 115) said 'research should support, and should not harm, human flourishing.' In this study, the researcher considered:

- the consequences of the research, including the effects on the participants and the social consequences of its publication and application particularly to the schools,
- the variety of views that would greet the report and the complex relationships within the schools,
- that there would be no harm to the schools or people working within them as a result of the research, and
- that the feelings of participants and respondents should be respected at all times.

Punch (1994) argued that qualitative fieldwork can leave the researcher vulnerable. As he described, difficulties were encountered in this study which had to be met as they arose, usually without reference to colleagues or outside advice. Bibby (1997) and Punch (1994) noted that the issues of harm, consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality as those of most concern in qualitative research. All of these were taken into account.

The researcher believed that by being open, and not underestimating the ethical considerations and dilemmas, the difficulties would be overcome. The only person who preferred not to be audio-taped was the Registered Inspector (Rgl). In a later interview (see below) he explained his preference saying that he felt that he might have prejudiced the impartiality of the inspection of School A. The preference may have been

because he felt anxious about putting his judgements and those of his team onto tape, which would have been unusual at that time.

Permission was sought from each of the participants to the study, both formally and informally. Members of staff at School A, where the majority of the data was collected, were asked at a full staff meeting if they would be happy for the research to be conducted at the same time as an Inspection was being done. They agreed in principle, individually and collectively, in conditions where refusal to participate could have remained anonymous. Further, it was decided that a blank proforma would be made available for staff on which they could record thoughts, feelings or events related to their experience of the inspection (see Appendix 3.2). The researcher guaranteed that any comments that she wanted to use or attribute would be handled in a way that would be consistent with the research ethics code of the University of Tasmania.

Also of concern to the researcher were the ethics of researching other institutions and the role of other headteachers who were known to her. This proved to be an unnecessary worry. An assurance of confidentiality was given to the respondents although, in the case of the headteachers, they were advised that absolute anonymity would be impossible. However, given that only one headteacher remains at one of the original schools, this is less an issue than once supposed.

The researcher was aware of the potential for bias if she unwittingly became a fully participant observer, as described by Merriam (1998, p. 93). She planned periods of

withdrawal whenever possible but found this very difficult to achieve during the inspection period. Periods of reflection were attainable by using the computer to compile the daily log (see Chapter 5). Further checks were introduced by paying particular attention to the sources of data and triangulation as noted above.

The role of the Chairman of Governors was interesting. His animosity to the inspector was apparent at their first meeting (see Chapter 5). This brought a very different set of dilemmas into the research process. There was a period of reflection by the researcher as to whether he should continue to be a respondent in the study, as he seemed to be reacting abnormally. He had to be involved in the inspection process (OFSTED, 1993) and, therefore, was subject to the participant observation. He had agreed to the research taking place, but it later became clear that he could well take exception to the data once it were reported back to him. The researcher decided not to make any early judgements about this, but to allow distance from the inspection to decide the timing of his interview.

This strategy appeared to be successful. His sensitivity to the inspection diminished; he proved to be an informative interviewee.

Personal dynamics

The study was affected by the personal dynamics between the researcher and the researched. It was shown in previous studies that personal dynamics could affect the quality and nature of qualitative data (Macpherson and Weeks, 1990; Merriam, 1988;

Burns, 1994). In this example the researcher was affected by verbal and non-verbal cues during her close contact with the respondents. She, in common with all researchers, has attributes such as age, sex, social class, ethnic group, warmth, dominance, need for social approval and even in this case, professional status, which will have affected the research. In this study, complex relationships, which are the essence of ethnographic research (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; Merriam, 1988) were fundamental. It was expected that personal dynamics would have an effect on research outcomes.

Punch (1994, p. 89) noted that feminist researchers developed a 'standpoint epistemology' that tended to inhibit deception; there was a natural empathy between the researchers and the researched. Though not feminist in nature, there was in this study a strong empathy between the headteacher/researcher and the headteachers of the schools studied.

In the absence of previous studies known to the researcher, she decided to proceed but only after some thought about potential difficulties and even harm that may have been a possibility for some participants (Bibby, 1997).

Personal bias was controlled or moderated by formal triangulation, through documents, for example, and informally, through conversations with others present at the meetings. It was also controlled by personal reflection when writing, for example, the daily log. Another source of personal bias was the values underpinning the methodology selected.

As discussed above, the research used case studies in which social life was studied as it occurred, not as it might have been created for the purposes of the research. It is a presumption that this type of enquiry, necessitating personal involvement and direct contact between researcher and participants will change the researcher's understanding of the world; her values, beliefs and feelings (Crowther and Gibson, 1990). It is also assumed that, in this study which tries to understand one facet of society, we are not dealing with 'an empty set' (Young, 1997, p. 105) but a vigorous and evolving culture.

It is also understood, that the personal values of the researcher will have affected findings, and as Willower (1994, p. 16) put forward

Values were accepted virtually everywhere as central to administrative choice, and qualitative studies were widely seen as getting at the realities of school life in ways that questionnaires did not.

The researcher was aware of the possibility of her values and perceptions affecting the data (Merriam, 1988). She was in a powerful position to decide what findings to present and how they should be presented. The researcher decided that, by using rich description, the reader would be able to draw their own conclusions or ask themselves the question, 'What's in this for me?'

A third source of bias, and one that probably made most impact, were the personal values of the researcher. To be explicit, she believed that schools and school systems

are accountable to the national and local Government for the quality of services that schools provide. At the school and classroom level, she believed that each student has a right to education that is accessible, equitable, shows balance and relevance and is, again, of good quality.

She also took the view that the role of a headteacher is to balance the interests of the student and other stakeholders in the school (parents, Governors, the community, the Local Education Authority (LEA) and national Government) against levels of achievement. Such levels require constant reflection and striving for improvement in every facet of the school's activities. Professional judgements about how well the school is doing should be made against national and local comparisons.

As others have argued (Barber, 1996; Hodgkinson, 1996), the researcher believed that schools do not exist in isolation, they are answerable to their stakeholder groups. They have a responsibility to lead the educational community and be responsive to the needs of society. They are accountable for what they do, how well they do it and at what cost to the national budget. One of the major tensions in the education service in England and Wales first raised by Callaghan in his 1976 speech at Ruskin College, was the lack of responsiveness of schools to these issues.

The writer also believed that the tension that emerged such as teachers viewing education as their 'domain' to the exclusion of all others, particularly parents, constituted a kind of professional arrogance. The school system, prior to 1988, appeared slow to

acknowledge the rights of parents or admit the demonstrable deficiencies in education outcomes of a large minority of students across the nation.

In order for justifiable comparisons to be made about schools and between schools, it was accepted as virtually inevitable that the Government should put a common approach in place. The National Curriculum in England and Wales was accepted by teachers but its prescriptive nature and the methods of assessment caused huge disquiet and distress to teachers. The writer had great sympathy for the philosophy of these reforms and believed that headteachers should take responsibility for managing the changes.

Similarly, the researcher took the position that Local Management of Schools (LMS) which delegated funding to schools was wholly acceptable. Schools had been given the responsibilities for improvement and therefore should be given the funding to enable them to do it.

On the other hand, the researcher believed that the marketisation of schools and overt competition between them was diverting attention and funds from improving the quality of teaching and learning. With colleagues, the writer established a collaborative group of schools that decided to use the legislation to aid school improvement by working together rather than in competition (Vann, 1998).

The writer viewed the national scheme for school inspection as a logical extension of the accountability mechanisms brought in by the Thatcher and Major Governments. It was seen as another 'management tool', a way in which the school's progress could be judged against nationally devised criteria. As such, she believed, it was not to be feared. Indeed, she saw it as a way of helping the school move into the next phase of its development.

As a headteacher, the writer 'lived' these values daily. They were 'tested' by the OFSTED process. As a researcher, she reflected upon them and during the course of this study found some of her beliefs wanting and potentially in conflict. Issues of equity and achievement within the school, for example, were called into question by the findings of the OFSTED report. The headteacher had not realised the extent of what was called by the inspectors 'a glass ceiling on achievement' in some subjects. Neither did she subscribe to the management model that was supported by the inspection report. Belief in the value of OFSTED as a process for school improvement was, therefore, examined in detail throughout this study.

Given the intensity of the researcher's belief, it was vital to use a range of techniques to control them as a source of bias. Schedules were prepared for the semi-structured interviews to make the context explicit. Feedback from meetings with inspectors was recorded verbatim and a variety of within-method verifications were employed to triangulate the data (see below).

A major problem anticipated at the outset of the study was the ability of the researcher to manage the multiple roles that she would experience as headteacher of one of the case study schools as it was being inspected. This was addressed by keeping a computer log of daily events and triangulating personal perceptions through conversations and observation with other participants in the inspection (principally members of staff, the Registered Inspector (Rgl) and the Chairman of Governors). The data in this daily log was subsequently verified by documentary evidence such as the written comments of staff, the inspection feedback notes and the final report.

It did not prove possible to develop the methodology by reference to previous studies of this type. None were found. OFSTED Inspection was a new requirement on schools as a result of legislation (DFE, 1993). No research was found that interpreted the perspective of the headteacher or colleagues at that time.

Particular care was taken with regard to participation. A profile of the schools and respondents is presented in Table 11.

The researcher tended to concentrate on the headteacher of each school.

The main reasons for this were:

- the researcher is a headteacher and wanted to reflect upon her own practice;
- great emphasis is placed upon the role of the headteacher in leading school improvement in the literature reviewed in chapter 2;

- the declared purpose of the OFSTED process is to improve schools (DFE, 1993) and hold schools accountable for their effectiveness through the headteacher.

Table 11 Participating schools and respondents

Participation	Respondents
School A 550 students aged 11-14	Headteacher 1 (1995); Headteacher 2 (from 1997), the Chairman of Governors and the Registered Inspector. Documentary evidence was collected from members of the teaching staff
School B 1700 students aged 14-19	Headteacher 1 (1995) and the Acting Headteacher 2 (1998)
School C 400 students aged 7-11	Headteacher (1996)
School D 580 students aged 11-14	Headteacher 1 (1996)
OFSTED official Research Officer RO	Member of the research and development branch, 1996
Registered Inspector Rgl	Interviewed 1996 Led inspections at school A (1995) and at school B (1994)

During the first round of interviews, Headteacher A was also the researcher. The school had 550 students on roll aged 11-14 in 1995. She spoke often of the right to a high standard of teaching and learning for all students and of the benefits of a collaborative approach to working with colleagues and other school stakeholders. Headteacher A (1995) had published her views that schools improve through a combination of academic rigour and professional support (Vann and West-Burnham, 1995; Vann 1995; Vann, 1998). She had been in post for five years, at the time of the first inspection of the school. She took up a new headship in April 1997. Her deputy succeeded her as headteacher of School A.

At the time of the first inspection of School B the headteacher had been in post for seven years. The school had about 1700 students aged from 14-19 and received students from school A at 14. Young into post, he was only 47 years old when he left in 1998. He was both liked and respected by the community and the students. He too believed in equity and had been a founder member of the collaborative group of schools, (Vann 1998).

School C was a junior school (7-11 years) in the same geographic area as Schools A and B. The headteacher was in his third headship although still only approximately 40 years of age. He had been appointed only a term before the Inspection in May 1996. The parents and children reportedly saw him as a fair man with a good sense of humour. There were 400 on roll and his school was regularly oversubscribed. The

head described himself as a total supporter of collaborative approaches to school improvement and one who abhorred competition or the marketisation of schools.

The headteacher of school D had been in post for seven years when she went to a new headship in 1996. The school was in a market town with a similar socio-economic background to the other three schools but in a different part of the county. Both the first head and the second were interviewed. This school enjoyed good relationships with its primary colleagues but was not part of the collaborative group with the other three. There were 580 students on roll aged from 11-14.

The Registered Inspector (Rgl) agreed to be interviewed at his London offices in 1996. He led the inspections of School A in 1995 and School B in 1994. Under the OFSTED (DFE, 1993) process inspection is a commercial undertaking. Rgl was appointed by OFSTED after he had tendered for the contract to inspect the schools. He then put together a team of inspectors, including a lay inspector, who carried out the inspections following a Framework (DFE, 1993; DFEE, 1996). At the time of the inspections of Schools A and B, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) were monitoring the performance of the inspection teams but there was no independent monitoring and no appeal process for the schools.

The Research Officer (RO) was a member of the research and development branch of OFSTED. He agreed to be interviewed at OFSTED after being approached for this study. His role at OFSTED was as a researcher but he was also an HMI. In this latter

role he was required to visit 'failing' schools, as defined in the OFSTED Framework, and assess the potential for improvement. He used the opportunity of the interview to show the researcher how the information collected by OFSTED from the schools by the inspectors was put onto a national database. Particular care was taken to triangulate RO's views with OFSTED publications, and with analyses taken from the national database by an assistant researcher during the course of the interview. His views were found to be justified.

Political

A tension was experienced by the researcher in terms of her role as headteacher of a school being inspected. Several aspects of the inspection were unusual and could have been cause for complaint by the school. She believes that she did not pursue a complaint as it was not in the best interests of the school but there is a doubt in her mind that she made the decision based upon the impact it could have had on the study. For example, access to the Registered Inspector could have been denied.

It is accepted (SHA, 1994) that the relationship between the headteacher of a school being inspected and the Rgl are critical to the success of the inspection process. The researcher was aware that the overlay of research could have brought additional tensions to this.

The offer of an interview with the member of the research team at OFSTED (RO) was unusual and very welcome. Again his position was potentially sensitive but he was

happy to have his comments tape-recorded. At some points he did decline to answer questions that he thought were too politically sensitive. This interview was more in the form of a conversation and was more wide-ranging than others so this appeared understandable to the researcher.

At no point did any respondent seek control of the interview material, any documentation, notes, or subsequent analyses. The researcher felt that access to the respondents and their openness could have been as a result of the personal contact and trust.

Data collection

Data collection and analysis are a simultaneous activity in qualitative case study research (Merriam, 1988). It is an interactive process during which the researcher is concerned with producing believable and trustworthy findings. An account of the process used to collect data for this study now follows.

All the interviews were conducted in surroundings nominated by the respondents. The first were between September 1995 and July 1996 and the second round between March and July 1998. The researcher had contacted respondents by letter, by phone or personally at meetings. The researcher knew them all and no intermediaries were involved. The respondents were tape-recorded and interviews were then transcribed for analysis.

The timing of the inspections and the availability of the respondents dictated the timing of the interviews in the first round. The second interviews were approximately two years after the first inspection for schools A, C and D. The period of time between interviews was longer for school B.

There was a high degree of personal respect between the original headteachers in the study. Of a similar age and experience, they were all well thought of within their professional community. On the surface, they found it easy to communicate between themselves but there had been no evidence before this study began that they translated this into in-depth conversations about their schools or school processes where their own status or performance was discussed. However when it came to discussing a potentially sensitive issue, inspection, with the researcher who was also a colleague head, they appeared to be open and honest, even to their own discredit.

The researcher had expected the headteachers to talk guardedly of their school's inspection given the enormous public interest in OFSTED. She had thought that they might try to "paper over any cracks" that had appeared during Inspection but this did not appear to be so. On both occasions that he was interviewed, it did seem that headteacher C was very angry about the whole OFSTED process. The others were more reserved but did express disquiet. This issue will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

The second round of interviews were different because only one head remained in the same post (school C). However it still appeared that the new headteachers were honest and open in their responses. The researcher did have reservations about the information received from the headteacher of school B (1998) after she had read the OFSTED report. It appeared that his assessment of the inspection was at variance with the inspectors' findings. This will be discussed fully in Chapter 6 and 7. The implications for the methodology of the study are that the triangulation of information given during interview with other sources of information was robust.

During the inspection of School A, verbal permission had been sought by the headteacher/researcher from the Rgl for parts of the process to be tape-recorded. She wanted to use the transcribed notes of the inspection feedback with the staff, to aid the school's development, but also for her research. The inspector denied permission, which was not unusual. He did agree the researcher could interview him at a later stage. This took place, as noted above.

It was critical to the research that the headteacher/researcher at School A be interviewed also. This was undertaken in 1995 by means of an unstructured interview on tape conducted by an experienced researcher in education. He also acted as a consultant to the school during the Action Planning stage of the inspection. Again transcription and analysis followed.

The second round of interviews conducted between March and July 1998, were more complex to arrange. The researcher had moved to a new post, geographically distant. Two interviews were conducted face-to-face as in the first round (school A and B), but one had to be conducted on the telephone (school C). Due to a technical failure, the verbal encounters were recorded by verbatim notes rather than by tape. Direct quotations were read back to the respondents and sanctioned by them for use in this study.

For the second round of interviews a semi-structured approach was used (see Appendix). Issues that had become apparent during the first interviews were to be the focus. Two themes, in particular, were explored: each school's progress towards the Key Issues for improvement identified by inspection, and the ways that the OFSTED process had helped them.

The unstructured interviews with the Registered Inspector and Research Officer could not be followed by semi-structured interviews, as access could not be gained a second time.

The researcher was able to complete her data collection within her predetermined time-scale. School A was unexpectedly notified of a second inspection, earlier than might have been expected in the four year cycle (DFE, 1993). Therefore, the researcher decided to continue data collection at this school up to and including the Action Planning stage i.e. in January 1999.

It is in the nature of the phenomenon being studied that there is no natural completion and, therefore, no natural point at which to withdraw.

Data treatment

Recording of data principally took place using a computer, tape-recorders and written records. The computer was set up in School A so that access could be gained immediately to record data. No other usage was allowed during the Inspection week. This became the researcher's log of events. The log recorded the events, salient facts that were contributing to a situation, and the thoughts and feelings of the researcher or respondents. This was analysed further at a later date. The same methodology was used for the second inspection of school A in 1998 although an oral record was used to enhance this.

Published materials such as the Framework (DFE, 1993 and DFEE, 1996) and the inspection reports were collected. Explanations and clarifications were sought from the headteachers and other respondents during interview.

Tape-recorded interviews were transcribed. Clarification and confirmation followed. These were then analysed for any emerging patterns. These themes are identified and discussed in Chapter 7.

Emergent themes were identified during the unstructured interviews and participant observation phases of the research. These concerned the process of OFSTED

inspection and the huge levels of stress that were experienced by all staff including the headteacher. Other themes included the apparent inconsistency of the process, the professional credibility of the inspection teams, the reaction of stakeholder groups to the process, the validity of the judgements in the eyes of the stakeholders and the way that the schools were led through the post inspection phase of the school's development. These themes are also discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Reliability and validity

Merriam (1988, pp. 170-1) said,

Since qualitative research seeks to describe and explain the world as those in the worlds interpret it, there is no benchmark by which one can take repeated measures and establish reliability in the traditional sense...achieving reliability in the traditional sense is not only fanciful but impossible...It is better to try to ensure consistency of results rather than reliability

To establish validity the researcher concentrated on identifying rich text. The methodology used in the study could be replicated, although the study itself cannot be replicated to give the same outcomes (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

Potential bias was a major concern. The researcher used an external mentor to remain critical of her methodology, analysis and possible hypotheses. She attempted to moderate the effects of personal bias in data collection.

The researcher also identified where respondents may have given an account that had a different emphasis elsewhere, especially in documentary evidence. Consistently high levels of truthfulness were found in the course of this research. Although it is understood that during an interview, the informant is portraying the world as he or she sees it. Additional reliability was given to this study, which was subjective in nature, by documentary information in the form of the OFSTED reports.

The truth worthiness of the data rested upon the researcher showing adequately that the study had multiple facets or constructions that are credible. As Merriam (1988, p. 168) commented,

The qualitative researcher is interested in perspectives rather than the truth per se and it is the researcher's obligation to represent a more or less honest rendering of how the informants actually view themselves and their experiences

It was acknowledged that, as the respondents in this study were almost all known to the researcher before the study began, there could have been a personal reaction that may have coloured the world being described. The researcher remained alert to this possibility as far as possible at all stages.

There were implications for the study, particularly at School A that relate to the dual role: researcher and headteacher. The researcher came to the view that the data could be relied upon. Interactions during the inspection process were triangulated from different

sources across the school that any manipulation of the data would have been impossible.

From the point of view of members of staff at School A, the research could have been another tension and strain in an already highly charged situation. In fact none was reported, and again, none of the process was deemed 'off limits' by them. Clearly the Registered Inspector took a different view and tape-recorded sessions were denied though notes were allowed (see above).

Merriam, (1995, p.54) argued that:

Qualitative research assumes that reality is constructed, multidimensional, and ever-changing; there is no such thing as a single immutable reality waiting to be observed and measured. Thus, there are interpretations of reality; in a sense the researcher offers his or her interpretation of someone else's interpretation of reality.

The data here was accepted as being subjective and likely to be affected by limited degrees of bias as discussed earlier. Triangulation through the perceptions of others, "member checks" (Merriam, 1995 p. 54) and documentation gave the data a strong degree of internal reliability.

If the methodology were seen to be reliable, it follows that the data collected had reasonable degrees of validity. As Merriam (1988, p. 167) noted:

One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional and ever-changing; it is not single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed and measured. Assessing the isomorphism between data collected and the 'reality' from which they were derived is thus an inappropriate determinant of validity.

It could be argued that validity should show relevance and be useful to some application of knowledge: Is the knowledge useful? Does it liberate, empower or add value to what is already known? The research undertaken could be said to have exhibited an additional form of validity in this respect. A summary and reflections on this chapter now follow.

Reflections and summary

The decisions and limits of the methodology selected for this study were clarified in this chapter. It was argued that the 'rich description' provided in the next chapter may be given provisional credibility and validity by the chosen research methodology. Generalisation from a single case study, or a small sample such as this, can be valid but should be treated with caution.

By reference to external frameworks and the literature (see Chapter 2) as suggested by Barnhardt, Chilcott and Wolcott (1979), the study was intended to provide insight into the accountability of schools through the process of inspection. The methodology was designed to gather data to show whether schools do improve as OFSTED's motto, 'Improvement through Inspection', suggests.

To be a researcher and, simultaneously, headteacher was an unusual and highly privileged position to be in. However, the researcher was aware of the effect that bias could have had on data collection in particular. Measures, described above, were introduced to overcome this.

The researcher found the interview and participant observation phases of the research enlightening and impressive. She gathered data that addressed the research questions. In the chapter, she discussed its treatment, reliability and validity within the difficult ethical constraints imposed by the methodology selected. The strengths and weaknesses of the chosen methodology are summarised in Table 12.

Methodological difficulties experienced when undertaking the study were, in the opinion of the researcher outweighed by the outcomes. In the circumstances, the researcher/headteacher believes that it is difficult to be objective about the research methodology. She found undertaking it to be challenging but given that she has no method of benchmarking her experience against that of others or of other methods of research that could have been employed, she has not been able to assess its relative

difficulty in carrying it out. From her review of the literature concerning research methodology she believes that it is robust.

It is appropriate to reflect upon whether an alternative methodology would have been more beneficial to the study. There could have been a greater emphasis upon quantitative data such as measures to track student outcomes in examinations and thus an assessment of whether standards were rising and in what time frame after inspection.

Table 12 provides some on a national level and by individual school within the study but OFSTED also takes measures such as student attendance, exclusions and value for money as important indicators of achievement. The researcher believes however that a school's ability to make and sustain improvement is more affected by the school's ability to learn as an organisation.

Thus the way that the case study schools approached and responded to OFSTED inspection was a better indicator of future progress than data might have suggested. The methodology used was seen as more appropriate therefore to gauge this.

In this chapter the methodology to address the two research questions has been described. The researcher/practitioner has demonstrated that she could simultaneously investigate the research questions, improve her own leadership services to her school, and improve her knowledge by undertaking this study, using the methodologies described.

Table 12 Summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the methodologies chosen for this study

Methodology	Strength	Weakness
Case study	Rich in detail, site and subject specific; case sensitive; illuminating multiple perspectives; can suggest solutions; describes, applicable to troubled scenario; longitudinal	Subjective; builds on tacit knowledge; qualitative, non replicable; ethical considerations potentially difficult
Participant observation	Firsthand; accurate recording; no discussion required; duality of role of the researcher; cross referencing possible later, triangulation possible, clarity of purpose.	Duality of role of the researcher; possibility of bias from prior knowledge; possibility of researcher affecting the event; ethical considerations could be difficult
Interview	Purposeful; more informal; effective method of exploring; values, beliefs, attitudes ad cognitive processes, identifies other sources of information; large amount of information given	Possibility of active interplay with the interviewer; difficult to control bias or diversions; necessity for interpersonal sophistication; coherence with other witnesses; need for prior experience, need for positive interaction between interviewer and interviewee
Data analysis	Quantitative; can show trends	Needs to be contextualised, may be partial; need to understand the reason for its collection; size of sample, relevance and app duality of role of the researcher appropriacy
Documentary analysis	Variety available for triangulation, variety of perspective	Potential for bias; number to be reviewed; quality of paperwork available

She made extensive use of ethnographic methods, aware of the potential difficulties attached to using such methods. She discovered and interpreted the 'reality' of OFSTED inspection as experienced by the case study schools. Methods were justified and issues systematically addressed were:

- the ethnographic and subjectivist approach used;
- developing case studies, interviews, participant observation and documentary analysis;
- ethical considerations and dilemmas, potential personal and political problems as a source of bias;
- data collection and treatment;
- reliability and validity.

The chapter concluded with reflections on the limits to interpretation, in particular that transferability cannot be claimed but that the patterns to the evidence have been shown to warrant serious policy concern.

Chapter 5 takes the form of a case study of school A. It is rich in detail containing as it does a daily log of events surrounding the school's first inspection in 1995.

Chapter 5: Case Study: School A

Introduction

The process of inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) was described in a previous chapter. It traced how OFSTED began in 1993 as a result of the Education (Schools) Act (DFE, 1992) and has since evolved and developed as a process. An overview of subsequent legislation and guidance from the DFE, DFEE and DFES were shown to have enhanced the role of OFSTED to the position where, by 2001, OFSTED had responsibility for inspections in all phases and types of educational establishments in the UK.

This chapter is a case study of a school being inspected under the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) procedures. The researcher monitored four schools through their OFSTED inspections. School A was inspected twice in 1995 and 1998. School B was also inspected twice in 1995 and 1998. School C was inspected in 1996 and School D was inspected in 1995. The school reported in detail in this chapter is School A, inspected in 1995. Chapter 6 contains details of OFSTED's inspections of schools B, C and D.

The account begins in November 1994, when the school was notified that it was to be inspected, and ends in July 1996, at the end of the 1995/96 school year.

The report weaves together multiple perspectives of events as they unfolded but is written from the perspective of the researcher as participant observer. The plural interpretations of the OFSTED process reveal the theories of participants held at the time, although there is also evidence that the participants' ideas changed as the process continued.

Triangulation was provided by a semi-structured interview with the Registered Inspector and by an email correspondence with the Chairman of Governors. The views of other participants and examination of documentation produced during the inspection by participants contributed evidence, as did the final report produced by OFSTED in October 1995.

The role of the headteacher in this account is two fold. She is the participant observer of the OFSTED inspection at school A and is also the headteacher of school A. The complexities of this and its potential for bias have been discussed in chapter 4. This chapter has been written from a log of activity kept at the time. Critical reflections have been added after a period of time but are discussed further in chapter 6.

Following training and advice about the OFSTED process offered by the Secondary Heads' Association (SHA), the headteacher of school A took the view advised by them

that OFSTED should be managed carefully by headteachers. At that time (1994), SHA had suggested to members that from the experiences of schools in the early inspections of 1993 and 1994, soon after OFSTED began, OFSTED inspections were punitive in nature and extremely stressful for teachers. They advised that headteachers should be wary of the process and seek to ameliorate, wherever possible, the stress experienced by teachers during the inspection week and the potential for difficulty produced when writing the Action Plan with the Governing Body.

SHA's advice to headteachers in respect of Action Plans was that the Governing Body of a school was generally not in a position to be able to write the Action Plan, except in the most general of ways. They suggested that headteachers should write the plan with the knowledge and support of the Governing Body.

A further area for particular thought by headteachers, recommended by SHA, was that of public relations and the management of the local news media, given that schools were being forced into a competitive situation by the legislation of the Education Reform Act (ERA), 1993; educational issues appearing in newspapers on a daily basis were often deprecating.

A further discussion of these contextual issues appears in chapter 7. However it is worth noting that while the OFSTED Framework (DFEE, 1992) was thought to be a

'snapshot of the school', teachers often construed the atmosphere that surrounded the first OFSTED inspections at this time as being punitive and judgemental rather than supportive and developmental.

The school

The case study school is a mixed comprehensive school, with between 500 and 600 students aged 11-14 years on roll at the time of this inspection. It is situated on the edge of a small market town in England. The school has six designated partner primary schools. At the age of 14, almost all of the students transfer to a neighbouring Upper school. The school belongs to a consortium of schools that practice a high level of collaboration. The consortium was formed in part to militate against what the headteachers saw as the disadvantages of overt competition between them. The formation of this group could be seen as being in contradiction to the spirit of the Education Reform Act, 1993.

At the time of inspection, School A had a student intake from a diverse socio-economic area that stretched across the town. The ability levels of the children were in keeping with national trends.

As a relatively small school, the headteacher had opted for a 'flat' management structure with only one deputy headteacher at the time of the inspection. Subject

leaders and pastoral heads of year were the middle managers. Management issues became a focus during the inspection and of the study.

The issue of competition between schools encouraged by the 1993 Act and the management of the information in the public domain could be said to have affected the way that the headteacher of school A managed the inspection process. A further issue pertinent to this school was that the middle management level, Heads of Department and Heads of Year, had a number of members who had been very difficult to manage, according to the headteacher, since she had been in post. They had shown a level of intransigence and truculence over issues such as changes in practice and raising standards of achievement that had caused particular difficulties. The appointment of the deputy headteacher in 1994 was a significant step forwards as it began the depersonalisation of the changes.

These management issues were noted in the headteacher's statutory pre- inspection form, completed for OFSTED. They had also been discussed with LEA advisors at an earlier date when the headteacher sought advice about how much information should be included in the form and how 'open' she should be to OFSTED about her perception of the difficulties that existed. The deputy headteacher had also been involved in the discussion.

The sequence in which the process is described in what follows is: notification of inspection, pre-inspection, confirmation, preparation, initial visit, perceptions of the inspection through a daily log, oral feedback to me, my deputy and the governors, between oral feedback and the draft report, the draft report, the report, and action planning.

Notification of inspection

A letter was received from the Office For Standards In Education (OFSTED) in November 1994 informing the school that it was to be inspected sometime during the next academic year, September 1995 to July 1996. I made a number of decisions that were to impact upon the work of the school in the lead up to inspection.

I decided to:

- inform the stakeholder groups (parents, Governors, teachers and students) about what could be expected during an inspection,
- encourage teachers and Governors to get their paper-work up to date,
- ensure that my deputy and I were as informed as possible about the process and predictable tensions through attendance at training courses run by the Secondary Heads' Association (SHA),

- inform the school's support staff about the process, their role in it and the potential impact upon the school,
- try to establish through staff meetings, governors' meetings and occasions when parents were in school that there was a positive attitude towards inspection ,
- help teachers understand that it was going to be a difficult period but one which could be seen in a positive light in terms of outcomes for the school,
- try to give teachers and support staff sufficient time and help to prepare the large quantity of documentation that would be required by the inspectors: development plans, departmental handbooks, financial information from the Bursar and copyright logs from the reprographics assistant for example,
- go ahead with a planned pre-inspection to be undertaken by an LEA team of inspectors and advisors in January 1995.

Inspection became very high profile in the minds of everyone in the school. In every newsletter to parents and every report to Governors from then on, I mentioned the inspection in some way or another. I tried to ensure that a shared feeling about inspection was built up; that there was a view about the process that was not

complacent or cynical but instead looked towards the process as a natural part of the school's ongoing development. I saw cynicism as a danger given the level of suspicion of the process in evidence nationally.

To this end meetings of staff contained both memos and check lists which grew in size and depth over the months, gradually raising levels of awareness for teachers and middle managers in particular. I stated categorically that the school was not going to start writing policies where there were none currently, just to fulfil the requirements of OFSTED. I knew that this had happened and caused considerable stress in other schools. The inspection was to be viewed as a part of the continuum of development that had begun when I was appointed to the school in 1990 and had continued when a new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 1994. The developments since 1990 were to be monitored by an already organised LEA inspection that was to be undertaken in January 1995.

I believed that it was very important that the OFSTED process be viewed with a proper amount of respect and professionalism but that stress and outright panic should not be induced by the period of preparation.

Pre- inspection

I had planned that with the arrival of a new deputy in September 1994, the school would be at the point at which I would 'buy in' a mini- inspection from the Local Authority team. The reason for doing this was to ensure that school staff, teaching and support, had a real experience of what it was like to be inspected. I believed that the staff should share a commonality of language and whole school perspective about issues that may arise during an inspection.

I felt it was imperative that the deputy should be able to share the leadership role in curricular and management issues; that the two of us should have a common view and common perception of what needed to be done.

I also believed that a particular weakness of the school that had to be addressed was the ability of the middle management level to interpret, with sufficient rigour, the National Curriculum programmes of study and schemes of work. I believed that this had led to a poor level of documentation within some subject areas and I was finding it difficult to move subject leaders forwards. I believed there was a level of intransigence amongst some staff and that they could be helped to change through the experience of the involvement of the Local Education Authority (LEA).

In addition, it was felt that to have experienced the level of questioning that would be part of an inspection before one was scheduled would be of enormous benefit to all staff, particularly middle managers.

Middle managers in the school had shown themselves to be particularly resistant to change and this was one of the reasons why the involvement in the group of schools was seen as being very important. By meeting with other colleagues to discuss a professional agenda, I hoped to gain from the good practice in evidence at other schools and remove some of the fear of change that was in evidence.

The results of the pre- inspection were surprising. Some staff were very unhappy about the school using a large portion of its budget for professional development to 'purchase' the services of LEA advisors and Inspectors. One teacher-governor, who was also the Professional tutor, was vociferous on this point in Governing Body meetings. The headteacher insisted, however, and it went ahead. After the pre- inspection one teacher reflected the views of many by saying 'That was the best piece of professional development I've ever undertaken.' Another whose department had not been involved for reasons related to staffing, expressed his disappointment at an 'opportunity lost.' On the other hand as data was not collected systematically about opposition amongst the staff, this evidence has to be seen as impressionistic.

The brief that had been given to the LEA was that the inspection should be undertaken within the OFSTED Framework but with the additional opportunity for regular oral feedback to staff on their performance during the week and their documentation. I thought it was of crucial importance that the pre- inspection was rigorous but also developmental if we as a staff were to learn about the OFSTED process.

The staff and the Governors discussed the report written by the team at length. The discussions were documented in minutes. These minutes show that agreement was reached on the following points:

- that there was a great deal of help and support needed to make overt the good practice that was present in the departments,
- that some heads of department were finding it difficult to implement the national, local and school policies and strategies even though they had previously spurned help,
- that the headteacher should help teachers to understand what Inspectors were looking for during classroom observations,

- that a precise time line of what was expected of staff during the coming months needed to be written to ensure that the school was ready for the OFSTED inspection, whenever it came.

A programme of work was begun in line with these suggestions but there was no way of knowing whether there was one term or four terms within which to complete it.

Confirmation

Nothing further was heard from OFSTED until 3rd July 1995, eight months after the initial letter. A phone call came from a man who introduced himself as Mr C, the Registered Inspector (RgI) who would be leading the team inspecting the school.

Mr C was pleased that the school had not yet broken up for the school holidays (it was due to do so nine days later), unlike the rest of the county. He explained that if it had, it would not have been possible for him to undertake an inspection anywhere in England or Wales during the week the school was given as all other schools returned for the new academic year later than this county. The Framework (OFSTED, 1993) was very precise on time. This appeared as an issue later. Mr C then told me that we were to be inspected during the week beginning 18th September 1995, that was the earliest date possible from the letter received in November 1994.

It was quickly realised that this was very early in the new term and there would be considerable pressures in consequence. At first glance the date gave ten weeks before inspection for preparation but that over six of these weeks the school would not be in session. In effect, the school had 19 working days before the inspection would start.

The Registered Inspector (RgI) was asked if the date could be changed. This was refused. It was not negotiable. Later I discovered that another school in the area had been offered the choice of this or another date. They had refused this one as too early in the term even though they would actually have been back in session before school A. Formally challenging the date with OFSTED was not felt by the headteacher, at that point in time, as likely to serve any useful purpose.

There followed a series of diary dates: the date and time for the meeting with the Chairman of Governors and the teaching staff; the parents' meeting and the survey and letter to parents, all part of the OFSTED process. Mr C was asked to despatch the official documentation with haste, as I knew the form I had to complete was lengthy and would have to be done at a very busy time of year and using unfamiliar software.

The decisions that were then made were to:

- inform the Governors, staff and other stakeholders through newsletters and word of mouth of the inspection date,
- draw up a plan of what had to be done: by the end of term; during the holidays; and at the very beginning of the Autumn term,
- begin the paperwork that would be needed by the Rgl at the very beginning of term (headteacher's statement, financial statements, staffing lists, breakdown of timetabling, tutor groups, children with Special Educational Needs and so on) as required by the OFSTED process.

The information eventually arrived from the Rgl a week later, after several faxes and telephone calls, but it came on corrupted discs. There was little that could be done before the term had finished. I told the office staff to leave everything until the start of the summer holidays as they were already coping with large amounts of work that could not be left until after the end of term.

In his haste, the Chairman of Governors asked for a letter to be sent home to parents, informing them of the inspection. The office staff left their tasks to produce and print the letter but it had to be withdrawn as it contained erroneous information: the date given by the Rgl for the parents' meeting, a critical part of the process, was illegal. There should

have been three weeks notice of the meeting for parents but this could not happen given the date that had been chosen by the Rgl. I wanted clarification from the Rgl about what the implication of this were.

I was critical of the Chairman's decision to send the letter out without prior consultation, as I believed that we needed to manage the process calmly and after thought. I also believed it demonstrated a lack of thought of the workload of the office staff and who managed that in an operational sense. It is possible that this could be seen as the first evidence of the confusion of role that was to become more pronounced as the inspection progressed.

I sought clarification from the Rgl and was left in no doubt that he would prefer to have the parents' meeting on the date already set, running the risk of challenge from a parent or other body about its legality. I insisted that he check with OFSTED lawyers and contact me.

The second conversation with the Rgl about this revealed that I was correct. The Rgl said that he would be prepared to 'take the flack'. When asked who would bear the responsibility for any challenge, he told me that it would be me or the Chairman of Governors. He suggested that the school send out letters to parents during the holidays, inviting them to the meeting. Again the headteacher objected as a third of the

school would not be on the roll at that point due to transition from primary schools. Postage would also have been very expensive for the school. He remembered that the OFSTED lawyers had made the same point. I cancelled the meeting. It was reorganised for the middle of the inspection week, which was not consistent with the OFSTED process at that time but as the headteacher, I decided not to protest.

I felt vindicated in making a stand and realised that I was going to have to monitor the inspection process, including the work of the inspection team very carefully. I believed that the Rgl did not have as full an understanding of the Legislation as he should have given the possibility of high-risk outcomes that there were for schools in the process. It was possible that teachers in the school who were also parents could have challenged the validity of the inspection on the basis of it having been improperly conducted. I was very keen that the process should not lose credibility or be seen as tendentious by anybody in the school, especially the staff and Governors as I wanted to use it to move the school forwards.

The Chairman of Governors was notified of the changed date and the work of getting the paperwork organised then began.

I believe that in insisting that the process was consistent with the OFSTED Framework, I reduced the possibility of challenge from parents and/or teachers. Disquiet existed

already amongst some about the whole process and the inspection team's 'qualifications' for undertaking an inspection had been a matter of question by senior staff. They were unconvinced that inspectors had sufficient knowledge or skills to undertake the inspection as noted below. A mistake about dates of the type described would surely have become the focus for dissent.

Preparation

At the beginning of the school year, many of the usual things that happen, like staff discussions on new programmes being introduced or changes to previous ones, were put into abeyance; readying the school for OFSTED took over.

The OFSTED questionnaire and letter to parents went out on the first day of term. At this point one year group had been members of the school for only two hours which made it difficult for their parents to answer the questions. The inspector reported that they did answer the questions and sometimes mentioned that they would have preferred to have been in the school for a longer period.

The surveys had to be returned within two days to be posted to the Rgl. The process dictates that the school does not see them but the results are published. There were in fact 175 replies which was seen as remarkable by the school and the Rgl as returns have not been high to this questionnaire in other schools.

A number of parents were directed towards the Rgl and the parents' meeting when they phoned in to complain about the survey. Their complaints centred upon the timing of the survey and the difficulty parents had answering some of the questions, as noted above.

The Bursar worked hard to complete the complex statistical information required. It was estimated that this took eight working days to do at a critical time in the school year. The office workload was increased at a difficult time.

I wrote the headteacher's statement, required by the process, based partially on the one written for the pre- inspection. It was shared with my deputy though it was usual to keep these strictly private. I wanted to give a balanced view of the school although I did want to raise all the issues upon which I was working; I wanted an outside perspective from the inspection on management issues in particular. Unfortunately, management had not been included in the LEA inspection as they did not have enough staff to carry it out.

By the 7th September my deputy and I were in a position to review all the documentation. At the last minute we realised that an important financial form was missing and this had to be completed in a hurry. Sensibly, the deputy wanted to make an inventory of all the materials that were being sent as the consultancy doing the

inspection did not have a high reputation amongst other schools for safeguarding materials. There was not enough time to do this. Again there were concerns about the quality of documentation forthcoming from two subject areas; these worries were confirmed later by the inspection.

The deputy headteacher made strenuous efforts to timetable the week in an appropriate fashion but needed to know from the Rgl how he wanted the feedback processes with teachers to be organised. It felt difficult to gain information from the Rgl. I had decided to employ supply staff to ease the staffing situation should teachers be required to receive feedback when they had classes.

The additional staffing to cover for unforeseen needs that arose was advocated by SHA. It had also been emphasised that it was critical to the smooth running of the inspection week that a good, harmonious relationship be established between the Rgl and the headteacher. Whilst I was happy to create a working relationship of this type, I thought it was also important that the staff understood that I was also being inspected and was not aiding inspectors in a process that would cause the staff pain.

Initial visit

Mr C visited the school on the afternoon of the 7th September. In the Framework it calls for an all day visit but he was there for only a few hours. He took only a small amount of

the documentation away with him (in supermarket bags) as he had come by train. The school had to parcel the rest up and send it by carrier at its own expense. This is not in itself a serious issue but the total costs of inspection are onerous for every school, particularly so for small schools. The other issue raised here is that the impression given to teachers was that he was disorganised this undermined even further the credibility of the process with the staff.

The purpose of the visit was to see the school but also to meet senior staff and governors. I had invited the three senior members of staff and the Chairman of Governors to the meeting in the belief that I was going to run the inspection as an open process in which all were partners. In retrospect, I think this was naïve but it was in the belief that the two senior teachers were part of the management team and would be involved in the management of the inspection. The Chairman of Governors had to be at the meeting as part of the process.

The Rgl seemed very ill at ease and blushed at times, it appeared that he was embarrassed at speaking to the group, but he did seem ready to discuss issues other than the necessities of the actual process. It was agreed that he and I would meet at 7.45am every day to review how the inspection was going and talk through any issues that were arising. He never managed to arrive at the given time which caused

considerable difficulties to the school in getting the day off to a good start: staff briefing, support staff briefing and morning assembly in particular suffered.

At the meeting the Chairman of Governors and one of the senior teachers were hostile to the Rgl; I was surprised by this as neither my deputy nor I had thought that there was anything that was likely to be controversial at the meeting. It was a meeting to discuss the process of the inspection primarily and the OFSTED Framework set that. The meeting developed a tone that I found potentially confrontational. As a result and after discussion with the Rgl, it was decided that neither the Chair nor senior staff would be invited to any more meetings with the Rgl, especially not the feedback sessions. The result of this was that my workload and that of my deputy was dramatically increased.

This first meeting was followed by a walk round school. I had not expected that the Rgl would want one at this stage and, indeed had, erroneously, promised staff that I would not be going into classes with him. At the end of afternoon school the Rgl met the teaching staff. He outlined the process and the way that the team would work. He appeared to be nervous but answered questions clearly. He stressed that the inspection was aimed 'at seeking opportunities for improvement'. He emphasised that Inspectors would 'maximise dialogue' but that comment at the end of individual lessons would be restricted by the need to move on to the next lesson.

The RgI recommended that teachers invite inspectors to specific lessons. He explained that teachers would not know until the actual week when inspectors would visit them as inspectors would be altering their agenda according to the early evidence.

The staff asked the following questions and received the listed answers:

1 How do Inspectors want to be introduced to classes?

We will wear badges and will not expect to be introduced, don't interrupt the flow of the lesson.

2 Where do you want chairs for Inspectors to be put in the class?

Usually at the back but if this is not convenient, anywhere.

3 Will there be any pupil tracking?

Not normally but there may be some related to SEN (Special Educational Needs) if the Inspector responsible for SEN thinks it appropriate.

4 Can we see the CVs of those who are inspecting our department? (Asked by a Head of Department)

Yes, but please respect their confidentiality. They are in the Head's office and I suggest that they are viewed there.

5 Are you going to see the children's work?

Yes, I want the full selection of work for each of 18 children, six per year group, representing all abilities. The work will be looked at during period 2 on Tuesday 19th September.

The issue of the inspectors' CVs relates to the atmosphere of hostility that surrounded OFSTED at this time. Teachers were aware that some people who became inspectors had moved out of other educational roles in which they had been unsuccessful. They were as a result unimpressed by their judgements, if they were critical.

The most valuable piece of advice given to the teachers by the Rgl, but probably the most difficult, was that teachers should show a balance in their lessons between the 'theoretical and the practical', replicating advice offered previously by the headteacher and the deputy. Given that this was only the second full week of term, however, it was

predictable that there would be a tendency towards teacher-directed lessons. The Rgl added that the schemes of work would 'guide' the Inspectors.

Mr C concluded his visit by asking for a lift to the station to catch his return train. He had been in the school for approximately three and a half hours. My deputy and I felt drained by the encounter and somewhat bemused by the day's events.

On the following day a parent was in school to talk about her son who had learning difficulties but did not have a Statement of Special Educational Need. His progress was discussed. She felt very positive and welcomed the support the school had given. Asked if she was going to attend the OFSTED parents' meeting, she said that she thought that it was only for people who had a complaint. I encouraged her to attend the meeting and represent her view (see below). At the AGM of parents in early October she asked how she could become a governor.

Later that same afternoon I met the Chairman of Governors. The meetings of the previous day were reviewed, particularly his perceptions of the Rgl and the impending inspection. At a previous meeting, he and I had nominated Governors to take on specific responsibilities during the inspection for example the Vice-Chair was the nominated governor to liaise with the inspection team; the Chair and two other governors were to meet the inspectors, one for Finance and one for Staffing. The

Chairman was to be questioned about the role of the Governing Body. All three were then to be cross-questioned about more general issues.

The Chairman was uneasy about his meeting, as there were to be three inspectors present. He felt that he wanted to have prior notice of the questions and instructed the headteacher to fax a letter to the Rgl outlining his concerns and making his request for information.

The return fax from the Rgl said this request was unnecessary but the Chairman of Governors clearly felt extremely anxious about it. During an interview later the Rgl said that he had never heard a Chairman of Governors express this anxiety before. He suggested that it is more often the case that inspectors are telling Governors to get more involved.

During the week prior to the inspection, I felt that there was a feeling of unnatural calm around the school. My deputy and I felt under great pressure. I told the children in Assemblies what was going to happen during the inspection week. Children's work had been selected and collected together to be looked at by Inspectors; they had been briefed about the procedure for their interviews. Because some children had only been in school such a short time there was very little to be seen in books. For other year groups, examples of work had been saved from the previous term.

The wall displays were put up. The school was ready. Along with the required information, the school had also submitted copies of letters of thanks and support that had been received over the previous year and surveys of satisfaction with the school that had been undertaken. This was to produce as rounded a 'picture' of the school, as it was possible to give the inspection team.

SHA and other colleagues had told me that the inspection team would use the display material as part of their evidence for the inspection. This was of significance for us as the evidence from children's work was limited by the timing of the inspection. An additional point was of course a wish that the school should look its best through having colourful displays of good quality work.

All meetings had been kept to a minimum in the week before inspection. My priorities were to meet with all the support staff: the kitchen staff, the lunchtime supervisors, the Premises Officer, the reprographics assistant and the cleaning staff, the office personnel and the technicians. The agenda for meetings with them was to explain to them:

- what would happen during the inspection, including questioning or observation of them,

- the pressure that the teaching staff were under,
- The possibility of excessive demands from other staff on them during inspection.

The absence of two significant members of staff at this time gave additional problems that had to be dealt with.

This agenda was put forward as I wanted the support staff to be aware of the inspection and its possible outcomes as it progressed and afterwards. I wanted them to have an appreciation of the very real pressures that were being experienced by the teaching staff as they prepared for and were inspected. I also wanted to avoid any potential difficulties if members of the teaching staff made excessive demands on the support staff during the inspection, especially as their team was incomplete.

The Chairman of Governors showed signs of increasing agitation. I was experiencing some tensions that were increased by inappropriate remarks from him. These were seen to be out of character. The deputy found this and other examples of what he perceived to be unwarranted intrusion into the professional domain, difficult. This was an additional pressure. From this point I kept a link by email with an outside consultant. I believed that I needed an external perspective given that those connected with the school appeared to be at odds with each other.

As a headteacher it was difficult to talk to colleagues who were in some senses competitors. I felt the need to be able to reflect upon what was happening on a daily basis so that I could depersonalise the complexities and focus upon the issues. My deputy believed that the Chairman of Governors was not concentrating upon his strategic role but was drifting into the operational business of the school.

Perceptions of the inspection: daily log

Day One

7.45am was the agreed time for me to meet the Rgl each morning but he arrived 20 minutes late for our first meeting. I informed him of the absence of the teacher and the impending absence of the Bursar who were both to have radical surgery.

My deputy was annoyed because the Premises Officer had not prepared the room for the inspectors as he had been instructed. He felt that instead of being able to concentrate on the school issues, he had to operate at a very minor level. This was not a good start for him.

On this and every day the Rgl was informed about any room alterations and he conferred with my deputy about his team's 'timetable' of activities. This was invaluable because staff knew what they should expect and Inspectors largely kept to it.

Our usual staff briefing was cancelled as my deputy thought that the inspectors wanted to see teachers in their areas.

It was my Assembly and I felt very much at odds with it. I was very nervous, forgot to use the bible extract that I had planned to use but was gratified to see that the children came into the Hall well and were well behaved throughout.

Lesson observations by the inspectors got underway, my deputy and I felt very much out of place and superfluous, there seemed nothing for us to do at this point. The Chairman of Governors came in again and asked for time to meet. I tried to distance him for the time being but my deputy pointed out that he was probably feeling very pressured too so I decided to make time later in the day for him.

I was not happy with my own performance thus far and was feeling ill. As my Bursar was going into hospital the next day, she was interviewed about the school's finances and systems.

By break time I was questioned by the inspector about the absence of 2 registers from morning registration (one tutor group was swimming and one member of staff failed to return it on time which led to a negative comment in the final report.)

After break I was interviewed twice: once by the Lay Inspector and informally by the Rgl. There was much concentration on the role of the senior staff, Science and IT.

There was some feedback from staff but I was concerned that insufficient was being said to us. It was clear that my Deputy and I had been cross-questioned but it was difficult to see the context for the questions and what had prompted them. We began to pick up rumours that there had been an open disagreement in the Design department during their interview with their inspector. The Head of Department was very upset by this.

At the end of the day, I discussed with my deputy and another senior member of staff, the day's outcomes. We shared the concern about being given information by the staff and decided that we must impress upon them at the morning briefing that we needed to be kept informed. We felt the need to keep track of what was happening so that we could be prepared for any further cross questioning and so that we could help any member of staff who was feeling unhappy with what was happening or with their feedback after observation. There was a code of conduct for inspectors but the experience of other schools being inspected was that this had been compromised to the detriment of teaching staff. We had a clear responsibility to support teachers most of whom were experiencing their first school inspection in their long teaching careers.

I met the Chairman of Governors again. He said he found my report of the day encouraging.

At 8.30pm, at home, I received a phone call from my deputy about the first feedback to the Modern Languages department that had occurred during the day. The head of department was very upset because he thought it was totally negative. I resolved to see the Rgl first thing in the morning to discuss it. I asked the head of department to put his thoughts on paper for the morning.

Reflecting on the day I resolved that I must:

- get a better flow of information from staff,
- provide better support for staff if there is to be informed critical feedback; they are not listening to positives,
- establish whether there are differences in the agenda of the HOD interviews for example that were being revealed by the interviews of Heads of department.

Day two

The Rgl was late again. His time-keeping was an issue as it made it difficult for my deputy and myself to communicate with the staff in the way that the Rgl had said in his

pre inspection visit that he wanted it to happen, that is, daily so that he could say which classes he wanted to visit and which teachers he wanted to see. Every time the teachers were uncertain of what was happening they became even more anxious.

I saw the Head of Design before 8.00am and got detail of the disagreement in the department. The Head of Department believed that one teacher had been arrogant and had upset the others. The Design Inspector had returned to them they were happy to listen to his advice.

8.05am I saw the Rgl and alerted him to the distress in MFL department and apologised for the rudeness of the member of staff in Design. There were small housekeeping and timetabling issues to be attended to. I saw the design teacher who said that he realised that he had handled things badly but had argued on a point of fact as he saw it. He promised to rebuild relationships with the department.

8.20am the normal staff briefing with a child-centred agenda. Then I told the staff that they must keep in touch with us [me and my deputy] as there was no other way that we could tell what was going on and take action where necessary. I made them aware of the cross-referencing that was going on constantly.

The [attendance] Registers were an issue with the Lay Inspector, based upon the previous day's events. One member of staff 'lost' hers and was in a complete panic. It was 'found' by the end of assembly so no harm was done.

The Bursar's absence was noticeable; the office was very short handed.

During the first two periods of the day, I was given a 'grilling' by the Rgl on the responsibilities for curriculum and the senior staff role in particular. I was told by the Rgl that he would have been happy to see more aggressive methods of removing 'dead' wood; his phrase for removing less effective teachers. He did not seem to accept difficulties related to employment law or finance.

I was asked about the reasons for: our choice of children's samples of work; my relationship with the Governors; value added; RE; shadow structures and finance. The Rgl expressed the view that it did not matter whether he spoke to my deputy or me about curriculum or pastoral issues he got the same response. I was irritated by his implied criticism as it was something that my deputy and I had deliberately tried to establish during his first year in post, therefore I would have thought it a strength to have succeeded! I decided to tell my deputy about this in case he was cross-questioned as he was.

While on duty at lunch I sat with some of the children who had met the Inspectors and got their impression of how it had gone. Other informal feedback came via one of our voluntary helpers who had overheard the meeting.

During the afternoon, I saw a senior member of staff who was to be interviewed. We talked about the personal profiles to be introduced in 1996, reports to parents and the future potential within the collaborative group of schools to which we belonged.

This was followed by my interview with the Inspector for RE. It was short but not so sweet. She said that my deputy and I should not feel inadequate because of our lack of commitment to RE; she felt that we were doing the right thing as far as possible. I told her that I thought there was little chance of changing things at present. She believed that teaching RE represented too great a work load for me and my deputy. The fact that we were unable to teach RE in one year group was an issue.

I then taught two periods of RE with the Inspector present.

A member of staff came into complain that he had been omitted from some documentation that had gone out to parents.

After school, there was a PSE (Personal and Social Education) meeting with the Lay Inspector present. He appeared to know little of the documentation that had been sent

to him which was a point to be taken up with the Rgl; several examples had emerged of the impression being given that documents had not been read. The Rgl had asked me for documents that we thought we had sent. Everything had been put together in such a rush it had not been possible to make an inventory and we could not prove it had been sent. The inspector came back later in the day and apologised because he had found the relevant documents. We still did not believe that he had read them.

Late in the afternoon, I saw the Chairman of Governors who reported back on his meeting with three inspectors. He had disliked one of them and got angry at the suggestion that governors should be monitoring the school's curriculum. A second meeting was to follow.

5.00pm I talked to my Deputy about his discussions re appraisal and the management structure. The talk had seemed all right but he had problems deciding how far he should open up about the personality difficulties within school.

8.30pm I received a report back from the Chairman of Governors on the governors' meeting with the three inspectors. The issues that were discussed were: the responsibilities of senior staff, the line management, head of department responsibility, the management structure, whether jobs could be readvertised, governors' responsibility to RE (Religious Education), the teaching load of my deputy and me, that

IT (Information Technology) was not up to standard, the good practice re value added surveys, the high level of staff non-contact time, the level of SEN (Special Education Needs) funding and the nomination of a governor for SEN.

The meeting was not an easy one according to both the Chairman and the Rgl. It was tense and the Chairman clearly felt that he was being put under undue pressure, particularly by the Lay Inspector who seemed to take a stance that the Chairman felt supported only one model of managing a governing body.

I finished my notes late in the evening.

Day three

8.10am the daily meeting with the Rgl was again later than arranged. I reminded him of the staffing difficulties re the two absent members of staff.

Very soon after the meeting finished I heard from a member of staff that the head of maths had been struggling all week because her nephew had been critically injured in a road accident and was unlikely to come out of his coma. I told the Rgl of this plus the effects of the other staffing absences.

My Deputy's assembly was very good.

During the early part of the day I was discussing workload with the office and walking round school to see how everyone was. I was feeling very disconnected from the normal life of the school. A meeting with another Inspector followed. We discussed management issues. I was disturbed by the amount of repetition with my previous interview with the RgI that left me wondering whether they were crosschecking or were their responsibilities blurred? She too was asking principally about the management team and the expectations that I had of middle managers to manage. She also asked about the relationship with Governors.

A brief lunch and then the formal oral feedback for IT followed two periods of teaching. I took copious, verbatim notes whilst trying to be assertive for the member of staff's sake. I asked for clarification frequently but the member of staff was very quiet, he knew that the report was likely to be, justifiably, very critical.

During my next lesson, I felt very uncomfortable. Maths is not my subject and an Inspector was present. I didn't know the group and I was very unaware of such things as pace for this lesson. I had discussed the lesson with the head of department the previous week. Her view was that I would not be inspected, how wrong can you be! The Inspector was complimentary and helpful. She seemed to like the way that I had constructed the lesson round newspaper articles that had been brought in. The

pressure of the lesson gave me even more reason to want to be supportive of the staff who were experiencing multiple observations.

During the last lesson I was with the head of the Science department for his feedback. I felt very sorry for him as he was receiving all his information in one day [he was the IT co-ordinator too]. Again the Science feedback was critical but overall 'sound'. One teacher had a wonderful feedback and one was dreadful. The future of these teachers was an interesting management issue.

By the end of the day I was very tired and so was my Deputy who had had a similar day. He had been receiving feedback from other subjects and covering lessons so that members of staff could attend feedback sessions. Visitors from abroad, scheduled many months in advance had also arrived in school.

At 6.30pm I had to return to school to be present for the beginning of the Parents' Meeting. The Chairman of Governors was there too but our only role was to welcome parents and introduce the inspectors.

I was pleased to see the number of parents who had attended but noted the arrival of one couple who were well known for their level of complaint. Waiting to hear what had happened was agonising. We had encouraged as many people to be there as possible,

especially those who had visited school during the previous week and those who were on the Friends (Parent Teacher Association)

At the end of the meeting several parents were keen to tell me what had happened, including the fact that Mr and Mrs G had been very negative and 'almost libellous' about me as headteacher. The effect on the meeting was that the others present were extremely positive, probably more so than they would otherwise have been, and indeed one governor reportedly, got very angry and stood up saying, 'Inspector, that is not my experience and I resent what is being said'.

There was much discussion of SEN but again any criticisms were met by positive remarks. This was an area where I had predicted negativity and had encouraged some parents who were particularly positive to attend.

All in all the parents' meeting passed off well enough. Mr and Mrs G. were directed towards a governor to represent their complaints. He passed them on to me straight away.

10.30pm, the end of a very trying and tiring day.

Day four

At the meeting with the Rgl first thing in the morning, I asked for and secured a set of the parents' comments from the meeting. These are not normally available and I was requested to keep them confidential. They were illuminating and helped formulate the future school improvement agenda. Everyone present at the meeting seemed to have admired the way that the meeting was run by the inspectors.

The Rgl told me that they would finish the inspection in the afternoon, ending with oral feedbacks. It turned out to be a very hard day. Despite all the additional work, we still had to get out some documentation of a more mundane nature to parents. The support staff worked miracles to get it all out without disturbing the pattern of work required for inspection.

Most of the oral feedbacks (feedback 1) were on this day. Because of the difficulties noted earlier related to the management team, my deputy and I shared them. I was particularly distressed to hear that the inspectors for Music appeared to have taken very little notice of the suicide of a previous music teacher, merely noting underachievement in the year group that would have been most affected by his death.

The RE feedback to me was predictably difficult but I felt distanced from it. The other feedbacks I attended, taking copious notes at each, were: SEN, Geography, and PE. My deputy did English, Maths, History and Languages. We both attended the management session.

It was a surprise to both of us that the language used in feedbacks was very enthusiastic. The inspector used phrases like 'amazing lesson', 'publishable materials', 'stunningly good' rather than the more formal language we had been expecting. I made a mental note to warn the staff not to expect to see this same enthusiasm in the final report. This was because I had heard from colleagues that the oral feedback sessions from OFSTED were often more enthusiastic than the more restrained and formulaic language used in the written report. The writing of, as far as possible, verbatim notes allowed us to reflect the actual words used; we were sure that the 'good news' would be forgotten and that the teachers would focus upon the criticisms unless the more enthusiastic report could be captured.

Our last experience of the day was to hear the early oral feedback on the findings. This gave us our first view of what type of a picture was to be painted but I'm afraid that by this time we were both so tired we took little in. We did take notes yet again and at the end asked the Inspector's advice about whom to ask to the formal oral feedback to be

held the next week. The Rgl refused permission for the final feedback session to be taped.

Day five

The inspection team had left and we spent the day in a state of physical and mental exhaustion. The staff were also very tired and I advised that they thought carefully about their activities with the children.

I did not want tiredness to lead to any reactive behaviour by the staff; my experience was that at least one member of staff could react more stridently than was necessary with the children.

Oral feedback (2) to me and my deputy

Exactly four working days after the inspection was completed, the Rgl returned with an assistant to give my deputy and me the oral feedback on our inspection.

According to the Framework, this was a part of the process that was very much a received activity: there was not an expectation of involvement in conversation, merely an opportunity to challenge the veracity of the findings. I had previously requested that the meeting be taped for research purposes but this was refused and so again we tried to make extensive notes, while paying close attention to the flow of what was being

said. There was no written copy for us at this point although the Rgl and his assistant had typed notes to talk to. The process relied upon us listening very carefully and being able to understand, interpret and challenge the implications immediately. Past this point the only opportunity to challenge would be on matters of factual error.

As noted earlier, my deputy and I preferred that neither the senior teachers nor the Chairman of Governors were to be invited to this feedback. The reason for this was the emergence of the confrontational atmosphere at the original meeting with the Rgl. However further reasons for it to be a meeting with only my deputy and myself emerged during conversation with the Rgl at the end of our informal oral feedback, they were that there:

- was considerable implied criticism of both the senior teachers and the Chairman of Governors in his report,
- would be a greater opportunity for my Deputy and I to discuss the findings with the Rgl; something he was not prepared to do in a larger meeting.

We therefore agreed to be at the meeting alone but both the senior teachers and the Chairman of Governors were unhappy about this. Neither my deputy nor I believed it was in the best interests of the whole school to insist upon their attendance; we needed

to know what the OFSTED judgement was, particularly on management issues, if we were to take the school further forward. We needed an opportunity to have a more detailed conversation with the Rgl than we believed we would have in the larger meeting.

The Rgl brought an assistant with him who made notes of any challenges/changes that were agreed during the meeting. The meeting proceeded as predicted. We found listening for almost 3 hours, the length of the meeting, extremely hard to sustain. It was necessary in our view to be assertive without being aggressive; to retain the co-operative atmosphere with the Rgl; to be constructive about achieving changes of language and emphasis and to be alert to errors of fact in order to achieve the outcomes that were best for the school. We also had to accept the justified findings, even though the messages were in some cases hard. This was largely achieved, as we were able to ask what the evidence base was for any particular finding. Answers were given which referred to the individual inspector's evidence. Each section was read out and clarification of meaning given.

It was apparent that my Headteacher's personal statement, required by the Framework, had laid the ground for the judgements they made about management. I still found it difficult to accept that there was little chance that the extended management team, as it was, would survive this report. The Rgl in essence said 'Sack Mr A and Mr B and you

will solve most of your problems'. My deputy and I believed that life was not as simple as that and if it were the sackings would have happened a long time ago.

At one point my deputy asked if there were any cognisance taken of how far the school had moved over the last five years and the potential influence of the suicide of the music teacher. The Rgl explained that it could have no influence, as the report was only a snapshot of where the school was at the time of inspection. It was explained that the report was not meant to reflect a continuum of development neither was it meant to point the way to developments themselves. OFSTED assumed that the school would address the key issues and main findings in its Action Plan.

At the end of our meeting, (approximately 6pm from a 2.30pm start, the Rgl had been 90 minutes late) I intended to meet the Chairman to tell him what had been said before the governors' meeting with the Rgl at 7.30pm. Due to the lateness of the meeting this did not happen but we spoke by phone. The Chairman of Governors had asked that I did this so that he could be well prepared for the evening meeting with the Rgl.

My deputy and I went home leaving the Rgl and his assistant at school reworking the wording of the main findings in line with our meeting in readiness for the governors' meeting that evening. It would be true to say that the only changes that were agreed by the Rgl from our earlier meeting were relatively minor and simply changed the tone of

some sentences or ensured clarity. None of the main judgements were altered as a result of our meeting.

The Oral Feedback (3) to the Governors

The Governors meeting was fully attended and minutes taken. The Rgl gave a concise presentation that the Governors found useful, understandable and interesting. He spoke for about an hour and then answered questions.

It was clear that the major concerns were from the teacher governors, one of whom was a member of the SMT. At the end of the meeting it was very pleasing and somewhat embarrassing when the other teacher governor, the Co-ordinator for Special Educational Needs, expressed the thanks of the staff to my deputy and me for preparing them so well for inspection. The governors, who had clearly been under strain during the presentation, were very relieved when they heard what the Rgl had to say. The atmosphere at the end of the meeting was celebratory.

Between the oral feedback and the draft report

The day following the feedback to governors, the Chairman was in school first thing. He wanted to know what was to be done in terms of the Action Planning phase. My feeling was that I must give time for thought and must give my deputy the primary role in leading the action planning, avoiding as far as possible too great an involvement of the

Chairman of Governors. This was because of the criticism of the Chairman's role that we received from the Rgl; he thought that the Chairman was inclined to be operational rather than strategic in the school.

SHA had advised that the Action Plan was a particular difficulty as governors were not able to write what was effectively an operational document; they could and should be part of the strategic direction that underpinned the Action Plan. Given the circumstances described earlier this posed particular problems for the deputy and me.

There was an air of expectancy in school but this was coupled with teachers being on 'automatic pilot'. The senior teachers wanted us to tell them all the issues immediately but we chose instead to report to the whole staff at the planned meeting the next week. This was because we needed to plan our remarks carefully. We did not want to criticise overtly any particular individuals or groups at this time. It was clear that there would need to be management changes, these would need to be thought through and the enactment of the changes planned carefully.

We planned and held the staff party. Almost all the staff were present.

Within four days, my deputy and I met for the day to begin our discussions about the report's implications for the school, especially in terms of the management structure.

We were very tired and not thinking very clearly but agreed a 'shadow' structure that did not use the senior teachers in the same way. It concentrated on defining the roles that were needed and then attempted to 'cost' such a model.

From this meeting we agreed that we would hold a meeting of the senior teachers and pursue the lines of responsibility and accountability to achieve greater clarity. This needed to be thought through further.

We agreed that as the Chairman had been putting a lot of pressure on us to say what we were doing; I would spend some time discussing our preliminary proposals. I told him of our proposal to abandon the previous structure. His response surprised me. There ensued a long discussion where it became quite clear that this was a route that he did not want to follow. His argument was centred upon his view that the senior teachers should be 'made' to do the job outlined in their previous job description. I reminded him that they had not applied for the senior management roles and that it was a result of an accumulation of job descriptions from the previous headteacher of the school. The meeting ended amicably.

Four days later the Chairman returned to the subject and again expressed his anxieties. He read me a paper he had written about the role of the senior team; the paper incensed me as the restructuring of the management team was seen by me then as an operational issue rather than strategic one.

The Chairman's proposals were that the two senior managers should either fully undertake the duties that appeared in their job descriptions or they should resign their posts. I thought that we should take time to review all the activities that we needed to be undertaken, review the structure that would be appropriate for doing this and then negotiate its implementation.

We had an intense discussion. At one stage he said, 'This [my refusal to take immediate decisions and give immediate instruction/be directive to the senior teachers] is not managing'. My view was that although he often talked about a 'hands off' approach to the school, his behaviour was exactly the opposite. This time I was not so much hurt by what he said as angry. I decided that there had to be a way of controlling the situation that was exterior to me. My deputy was also getting angry at the many calls on my time. It occurred to me that my deputy could well be asking himself what role he was supposed to play alongside a Chair who seemed to want to do it himself.

On reflection, there were ways in which I could have responded more positively to his suggestions about changes to the management team. The timing of the proposals was unfortunate but I perhaps responded so negatively because of the perception that I had that we had to take the whole staff with us in the changes we were to make. I also needed to leave those for whom there could be criticism in a position where they could

make personal decisions with dignity. It did not appear to me that an autocratic approach would be beneficial.

The draft report

A draft copy of the report was received, two days after we were told to expect it, with a request to check and return it within 24 hours. I told the Rgl in a telephone call that this was not possible because of commitments but we would try to return it with comments by Friday afternoon. I gave post holders in school (heads of department and heads of year etc) the pieces that referred to their areas and asked them for immediate comment. I was unhappy that again the Rgl's inability to keep to deadlines was putting us under pressure. The Framework is very prescriptive and allows no flexibility over timing.

I went to a professional development day for our group of headteachers. It was a lovely day; the theme was Leadership for Effective Schools led by a friend and colleague in Higher Education. Coincidentally, during the course of the day colleagues made comments about the numbers of visits/intrusions that I experienced from my Chairman. They did not know or realise how pertinent were the remarks.

The day gave me the opportunity for reflection and I asked my colleague leading the day if he would help me manage the Action Planning phase of the inspection with particular reference to managing the governors. I thought that if I could achieve some

space between the Chairman, and me it was likely that the planning would be more professional and less personal. I also knew that he was well respected by both the staff and the governors, including the Chairman. I telephoned my deputy to get his agreement to the invitation and then secured my friend's services. The three of us agreed to meet early at half-term to begin detailed planning.

I met the Chairman of Governors several times over the next day or so to discuss day-to-day issues; the meetings were cordial. The support staff review that had been commissioned by us from the LEA was received and the recommendations were as I had hoped.

In the first real 'block' of time I turned my attention to the OFSTED report and went through it line by line, checking the details, typographical errors and also identifying some last minute changes where the language or inferences given to particular phrasing had led to an unfortunate emphasis in my view.

I rang the Registered Inspector at 4pm and went through the report on the phone, line by line. I raised all the points highlighted by heads of department and post holders. The Rgi allowed some to be altered but was adamant about others remaining. Overall the majority of queries were accepted and altered. The phone-call was courteous, even friendly, and took an hour to complete.

This brought us to half term and I felt strongly that we had not really got to grips with the term's usual work at all. We were all exhausted however.

The final report

The full OFSTED report was received early in half term. It was a reasonable document but, as expected, had none of the enthusiastic language that staff had heard within the oral feedbacks. It had been translated into 'OFSTED-speak'. Thinking immediately turned to the Action Planning phase, but when we returned to school after half-term holiday and the staff had the opportunity to look at the whole document, two departments realised that they had been omitted from the section that gave the 'headline news'. This had to be rectified by an addendum negotiated over the phone with the Rgl. He did not ask to see a completed version before it was circulated to the LEA and the community.

The précis of the report to be sent to parents read very well and I was pleased with that. I had been concerned that the distillation of the full report might mean that blandness could lead to us being 'damned by faint praise'. We did not know when the distillation had to be sent out to parents and guidance from the LEA and OFSTED itself was ambiguous on this point. We decided to wait until we had begun the discussions about restructuring with staff and had had an opportunity to work with individuals who may have been adversely affected.

Action planning

During half-term, I had met my deputy and the consultant who was to work with us. We discussed the 'story so far'. The consultant played the role of listener, said very little but prompted my deputy and myself to crystallise our thinking and probe the avenues that were possible. The conversation helped us to air what had been differences about our stance towards the senior teachers in particular: my deputy had wanted to change direction with them at the beginning of the summer term and I had rejected the idea at that stage. The OFSTED inspection showed that he had been right to make this suggestion.

The second part of the agenda was to plan the work for the rest of the term and writing the Action Plan that had to be submitted by 15th December.

It was agreed that the main management difficulty was to reach a position where the teachers concerned felt able, with us, to reflect upon their role. We did not believe that being heavy handed was appropriate. It was probable that they would see it as status being removed from them and would then subvert any alternative plans or involvements from other staff if we did not work with them. In retrospect it is probable that the

Chairman of Governors should have been involved in these meetings. The fear was that he would insist on a particular approach with which both my deputy and myself felt at odds. However we did not 'test' this so it remains conjecture.

A pattern of meetings that covered the rest of the term was devised and a series of 'touchstone' meetings between the consultant and my deputy and me and/or other staff and governors was set up.

We felt relieved and encouraged by the meeting not just because there was an exciting outcome and quantifiable progress but also because we believed that we had been thinking proactively and clearly about the large issues helped by an experienced outsider. At the first possible moment, the staff were given copies of the full report and reminded about the difference between the language used by Inspectors at the feedbacks and the OFSTED-speak to be found within the final report. The latter was very dull in comparison and seemed to be formula written as SHA had predicted.

Other Heads interviewed during the course of this study commented similarly, one reported,

the oral feedbacks were stunning and they [the teachers] were so thrilled...and I had to say to them, hang on when you get your written report it won't be like that.

You will be disappointed. When the written feedbacks came, it wasn't like that and so there crept in very quickly a sort of cynicism about it.

The staff meeting was not a full discussion, that was still to come, but it was important not to let staff forget the simple message that the school had done well.

There followed a meeting of the senior teachers. Notice for the meeting had been extensive but as usual there were those who could not stay even though it was clearly a very important meeting with the sole agenda item being the inspection report.

Prior to the meeting the senior teachers had been asked to prepare an outline of what they considered the management issues were in the OFSTED report. Further they were asked to identify in what ways these issues would impact upon the school. This was the pattern of questions to be asked at all subsequent meetings of post holders.

One had gone through the report and had highlighted many parts. She listed the following: roles and responsibilities; incentive allowances; teaching and learning styles; long-term planning; timetabling issues (time allocation); differentiation; pupil responsibility and multi-cultural issues.

Another had not highlighted anything on the report but concurred with the above. The third had made copious notes highlighting similar issues to the first but added non-contact time.

My deputy had highlighted the report in four ways: management issues; teaching and learning styles; differentiation; and, sharing good practice. He spoke of the accountability issues in terms of the lines of accountability and the improvements to be made at middle management level in order to give a clearer structure to the management of the school.

My deputy and I had been very anxious about this meeting because we thought that there would be a reaction to the report, seeking to discredit it. That did happen. One teacher said we did not need to accept what the report said. We were adamant that if we as senior managers of the school could reject some bits of the report, then so could other members of staff and we did not want that to happen. It seemed to us that it was not in our best interests to suggest that we should enact within the Action Plan only what suited us. It was important in our view that the staff had a united approach to those issues we needed to address even if we were critical of OFSTED's judgements.

There was a lengthy discussion of accountability. The senior teachers defined their view of their own management accountability by saying that they felt they had no

accountability for ensuring that the 'teams' for which they have had 'responsibility' did what was wanted. Essentially their view of their accountability extended only to them being a two-way channel of communication. They were categorical that they did not want to be involved in anything that would involve them in disciplinary issues with staff, for example, or ensuring that whole school policies were implemented.

Further they saw no conflict between their view and their previous responsibility for appraisal. My deputy and I took the view that without a feeling of responsibility and accountability for this by the senior teachers, there was unlikely to be any rigour about the appraisal process. We felt that there had to be a way that the senior teachers were accountable for the targets that were negotiated with the staff and vice versa.

The meeting concluded with general agreement about the way that the pattern of meetings to write the Action Plan would be structured. There was a clear view by my deputy and myself that as a senior group of teachers concerned with strategy and future policy for the school, this group was now finished. We resolved to use the group for information purposes and to do all the policy and strategy work ourselves from this point.

There followed a full governors' meeting. At this meeting it was important that the governors' endorsed the process that we were adopting to write the Action Plan was

supposed to be the governors' Action Plan. It turned out to be a very frustrating meeting. The governors spent a lot of time saying that they would not rubber-stamp what the school (me and my deputy) were saying and doing which was understandable. The Chairman of Governors got very angry when, having said they wanted to be involved, the governors would not or could not meet. Legally there was only 40 days from the receipt of the written report until the submission of the Action Plan, which left little time for its production.

Eventually two sub-committees were formed focusing upon finance and staffing - both forms of governance with which the governors were familiar and felt comfortable. They agreed to meet with us on two occasions to discuss the Action Plan: for an afternoon meeting (two governors for the whole afternoon) and then a second meeting after the Action Planning Day, 4pm on a Friday.

With hindsight, it could be said that the disquiet being shown by the governors reflected the differences that there were between the methods that the Chairman wanted to adopt, those that the wider governing body wanted to be involved in and our own professional frustration where we allowed our thoughts and actions to be of greater significance than those of the governors, particularly the Chairman. It could be said that our accountability to the governors was subsumed at this point to the accountability we felt we had to the OFSTED process.

30th October

The first full meeting to begin the Action Planning was held. Present were the responsibility postholders in the school, my deputy and myself. My deputy and I had planned to discuss with post holders the issues that were raised by the OFSTED report. There was some reluctance to accept the report. Staff said, 'We do not have to accept it all.' My response was that although there were aspects that I did not like or could resent, I would not be avoiding any of it. It was my view that if I had said that I would be selective then staff would have been inclined to be selective too. I believed that this should not happen otherwise we would make no progress and a valuable opportunity would be lost.

My deputy and I were both anxious about this meeting. Since I had joined the school this group of middle managers had been the most difficult, truculent and intransigent, to manage; my deputy had found them equally unpredictable. It is possible that our anxieties over this group affected our decision-making throughout the OFSTED and post OFSTED period, possibly to the detriment of our relationships with the Chairman of Governors in particular.

After a difficult start, one member of staff challenged one of the findings. However one of the newer post holders confirmed the view being expressed and then the meeting

supported it. This was a turning point and we had a worthwhile and forward-thinking discussion that provided an agenda for all later discussions. We were very pleased at this outcome. This was a good start.

Later the Chairman of Governors gave me an agenda for a meeting on 3rd November. It appeared to be wholly inappropriate as the meeting was scheduled as a planning meeting for me, my deputy and the consultant. The governors had been invited to join in and observe but they were not setting the agenda or running the meeting; no agenda except of the loosest kind had been felt to be necessary by us.

It seemed that the approach being used by the Chairman was hierarchical. In our view this methodology was unnecessary as we were trying to get the teachers to be participative and to take ownership of the report outcomes. His approach concerned me. I believed that I should try to encourage him to be collaborative.

With careful reflection it could be said that the changes we were trying to enact in the staff through the approach we had planned were attitudinal rather than just organisational. It would seem that in trying to achieve this we were not sufficiently aware of the need to convince the Chairman of Governors of our methodology. Also it could be said that the methodology precluded anyone except a professional from being fully involved.

3rd November

With the help of the external consultant this was a day of thinking through the issues and planning the next stages for my deputy and me. We had not expected that we would be as far ahead in Action Planning as we thought we were by this juncture.

During a morning session, we discussed the outcomes of the post holders' meeting and also how we would handle any difficulties with governors. We decided that the questions that had guided the head of department meeting would also guide the meetings of the departmental and pastoral teams; they did seem to be sufficiently robust.

We also discussed how we would respond to the Chairman of Governors during the afternoon meeting. There were a number of possible tensions that needed to be resolved or planned for.

After lunch the Chairman and another governor joined us. There was to be a formal presentation from the consultant and me about the process that we had devised and the reasons for doing it this way. We also asked the Chairman of Governors to make notes of the session.

This proved to be a successful strategy in that the governors listened carefully, accepted the methodology proposed and acknowledged the potential and strength of it. The minutes were circulated to all other governors in the hope that they would feel they had been both involved and consulted and that they would feel ownership of the Action Plan. None of the governors expressed any difficulties or disquiet about the outcome of the meeting, the way it was set-up or conducted.

We felt that it was the end of a good session although it is true that we had manipulated the process, the meetings and the outcomes. We were open to criticism for that and perhaps for denying governors and the Chairman in particular, opportunities to take a higher profile in the proceedings. However we believed that this was the approach that would bring about the most successful outcome in terms of the future progress of the school and in terms of achieving commonality of purpose amongst the staff.

13th November

At lunchtime I saw a member of staff who was to retire or leave during the next year. It was crucial that he did as his departmental OFSTED report was poor and there was little likelihood of improvement within his department until staffing changes occurred.

This interview went well and plans for change were discussed.

At the evening pastoral team meetings the same questions were addressed as had been addressed by the heads of department but with a small session to go through the arrangements for 17th November.

The minutes from the pastoral meetings revealed the first slippage to previously held positions: one team were 'difficult' but this may have been as a result of side issues such as the leadership of that team.

At 7.30pm there was a governors' finance sub-committee meeting. The Chairman and I had agreed an agenda the previous week. On the day of the meeting a completely different agenda appeared in the school office. This was potentially very difficult as it meant that at best I would be reactive to any discussion rather than proactive. It was not the way that we had ever prepared for a meeting before.

Perhaps foolishly, I decided that the only way to handle it was to take the initiative at the beginning of the meeting and get the conversation underway in line with the outcomes I was seeking. The minutes confirm that we discussed principles of making financial plans firstly. This discussion was helped by a teacher governor who proposed that as a result of the OFSTED report, we should appoint an RE teacher. I reminded them that they had discussed this at a governors' meeting and had decided that, for reasons of finance, they did not wish to do this.

I felt that it was a difficult discussion but having taken the initiative the discussion was much more informed. The major outcome was that the governors decided that there would have to be major restructuring to cope with the differing demands of the OFSTED report and a shrinking budget.

15th November

Newspaper reports appeared and I was relieved that one was very good and the other was small but harmless from a paper that did not usually support the school. The cook produced buns for everyone and congratulated the staff saying 'Now it's official'. This seemed like closure.

17th November

This was the day nominated for Action Planning with the whole staff. The day had been mapped out: including a period of whole staff discussion to begin with followed by time for each department to follow the four major threads identified in the report: differentiation; independent learning; sharing good practice and management issues. An active, participative approach was used such that staff used simple task sheets to outline their response to the points made in the report.

None of the governors were to be involved in the day. This was because we felt it important that the staff were able to learn together without the added burden of scrutiny by governors which, previous experience had shown, constrained open discussion and the teachers' willingness to address issues honestly.

Only a short time into the work, my deputy and I were doing the management and RE task sheets, when the phone rang. It was the Chairman of Governors who wanted to change the whole programme. He suggested a critical path analysis as an appropriate route forward for the school's decision-making processes. I took great exception to this intervention, it appeared ill-timed and an example of the Chairman of Governors crossing over from a strategic role to an operational one, especially as the format of the day and the outcomes that were being hoped for had been discussed with him prior to the event.

The phone call affected me greatly causing me to question my role; it undermined my confidence. My deputy and I worked through our tasks. At 3pm the staff finished and departed. My deputy and I had an hour to prepare for the governors' meeting. We decided to lay out all the task sheets under the appropriate headings so that we could discuss them with the governors.

At 4pm the governors joined us with the external consultant as arranged. It was clear from the outset that the Chairman was not talking to me.

We reported on the work of the day and talked them through the methodology that we had employed. There was much discussion about what we had done and what had been achieved. The Chairman was sceptical but other governors were positive and endorsed the work.

The governors listened to the consultant as he gave the work credit. I was very glad he was involved. I felt exhausted and deskilled. The Chairman left the meeting without exchanging any conversation. At this meeting the way that the Action Plan would be written was mapped out embrionically.

20th November

My deputy and I went over the outcomes of the training day and planned the way that the Action Plan would be written. We gave the staff time to think through their own work, the additional threads of their Action Plan and time for individual responsibility holders to map out their responses.

The Chairman of Governors continued to worry me as it was clear that he needed a role but I was at a loss to know how to include him. It appeared that his view of management meant telling others what to do; it appeared controlling and authoritarian. In contrast the model that we were putting forward for the action plan was consensual and participative, we believed.

It could be said that in many ways the difficulties were arising because of the OFSTED process' insistence that the Action Plan was the responsibility of the governors without having given the governors a way in which they could discharge that responsibility. This problem had been commented upon by SHA and other headteachers who had already been inspected as one of the many tensions that the process instigated. In some ways the tension replicates that round the production of the Annual Report for Parents which is supposed to be written by governors but the level of detail required to be contained in it by law, makes this impossible to achieve.

22nd November

Governors' staffing sub-committee meeting. No particular issues arose pertinent to inspection and the Chairman of Governors was not present. This committee was not ready at this point to take decisions about staffing changes following the inspection.

23rd November

The consultant came in and listened to my deputy and myself while we teased out how the Action Plan would be written, by whom and in what way. A prose style was accepted rather than a matrix approach observed elsewhere. It was agreed that my deputy would write up the key issues and main findings and that I would write up the preamble. As in other schools, it was decided that writing by committee was not going to be possible.

It was agreed that the Plan to be sent to OFSTED would feature the preamble, key issues and main findings illustrated by the task sheets produced on the Planning Day with the staff. This made the Plan bulky but it was a clear indication of the work that had been done already and that which was to follow.

The absence of the Chairman of Governors over a period of time added strain to me; I disliked this perceived breach in our relationship.

24th November

I saw the Chairman of Governors; it was a reasonable conversation. He said he was totally unaware of the tensions he had caused me and that he had had a row at home

on the day in question. Whilst this seemed implausible I was happy to hear of his support for what we were doing with the Action Plan.

27th November

A meeting for the post holders was held and the rough draft of the Action Plan was discussed. Discussion centred on the preamble, the management issues and the plans for the next training day.

It was agreed that work would centre on the OFSTED comment 'Responsibility post holders will need to play a greater role in monitoring and promoting achievement'. The meeting was asked to outline ideas of how this could be achieved.

30th November

Governors met to discuss and ratify the Action Plan. It was agreed without change. At the surface level the Chairman of Governors was supportive. It could be said that, realistically, he had little choice at this point. Other governors had not expressed the view that they wanted to be more involved in the process and, indeed, had rejected other opportunities to be. It remained the case that the Action Plan was supposed to be

written by the governors; in the circumstances it was difficult to see how that was going to be achieved

4th December

8.40am: I realised that I had not told the children in a formal way about the inspection report. I used a full assembly to outline the main issues to the children, particularly those that related to behaviour, discipline and their achievement. I quoted from the report directly wherever possible.

3.15pm: staff meeting where the Action Plan was discussed. It was a tense meeting some small alterations were made but it was reasonable given that the senior staff had been largely excluded from the process of actually writing the plan; their role had been to concentrate on all the preparatory work. In the event the only real disagreement was about minor changes of wording but this change was after acrimonious discussion.

I offered to have a separate meeting later in the week with the two members of staff who objected to the original wording. It was noticeable, as in many previous staff meetings that nobody else on the staff appeared to support the disquiet being expressed. Of note also was that one of these two was a member of the SMT. He had not expressed his views at any stage before the meeting even though he had had the

information and could have done so. He had, as before, waited for a public forum rather than a more direct route to my deputy and me.

I felt it was an example of the lack of corporate responsibility that we had experienced many times before. There could have been other reasons such as he felt the need to use the full meeting to give him strength, perhaps he felt daunted in the smaller meetings. It may be that he did not feel able to react spontaneously when issues were discussed and could only make his views known when he had had time to consider them between one meeting and the next.

11th December

The full Action Plan and the task sheets that were to be sent to OFSTED were duplicated. The covering letter requested guidance about the planned publication for parents of the Action Plan. No answer to this was subsequently received so we went ahead with publication.

Copies of the full plan had been circulated to staff at the draft stage so were not reissued although they were instructed to make amendments.

13th December

The Action Plan was despatched on time.

Christmas Holidays.

During the holidays, I spent considerable time rewriting the job descriptions of all the support staff and writing model timetables to address the OFSTED issues. My deputy and I met to agree the new model of line management that we were developing whilst maintaining the 'flat' structure at the head/deputy level.

Summary and conclusions

The chapter followed the inspection process by OFSTED in its entirety in School A in 1995. It followed the sequence of stages of the inspection in detail through notification of inspection, pre-inspection, confirmation, preparation and initial visit through to a daily log reflecting the perceptions of the inspection and the subsequent feedback and report.

The chapter was written by the researcher as participant observer and weaves together multiple perspectives of the other participants as well as her. As far as possible,

triangulation has been offered. The complexities of the situation were discussed in Chapter 4.

From the chapter, it can be seen that the OFSTED inspection process as experienced by School A was difficult and tense. It could be argued that the process was made more difficult by: the behaviour of the Registered Inspector (Rgl) (continual lateness and lack of organisation); the behaviour of the Chairman of Governors (personal animosity towards the Rgl and late changes of mind about the conduct of the action planning stage); the lack of understanding of the role of the SMT in inspection (confrontational approach to the Rgl; unwillingness to take responsibility) and the lack of adherence to the Framework (DFEE, 1992) by the Rgl.

On reflection, however, it could be said that the headteacher could have predicted at least some of this and worked to mitigate it at an earlier stage. She may have predicted the reaction of the Chairman of Governors for example and that of the SMT. It could also be said that she tried to manage the process in a developmental manner. This could not easily be so managed given the rigidity of the Framework. She could be criticised, therefore, for making the staff and governors vulnerable in a process for which they were ill-prepared at this stage.

Conversely, it could be said that the inspection needed to be managed in this open fashion to ensure that organisational learning took place and the school could improve as a result of the inspection experience.

In Chapter 6 the inspections of Schools B, C and D are reported with the second inspection of Schools A and B. Against the background of a changing inspection Framework (DFEE). It will be shown that there were similarities between the findings reported in Chapter 5 and the experiences of the schools in Chapter 6. Explanation and reflection on these experiences and probable impact upon the schools' improvements will be offered.

Chapter 6: Case Studies of Schools A (second inspection),

B (two inspections), C and D.

Introduction

In Chapter 5 a detailed case study of the inspection of school A in 1995 was presented. The participant observer, who was also the headteacher of the school, described the inspection of the school by OFSTED from her perspective. She described the decision making that took place as the process unfolded. Triangulation was by reference to minutes of meetings, written notes kept at the time and recollections of other participants, collected by semi-structured interview and informal conversation. In this Chapter the OFSTED inspections of the three other case study schools and the second inspection of school A and school B in 1998 are reported upon in less detail. Analysis, critical reflection and discussion of the data follow in Chapter 7.

School A, second inspection, 1998

A new head was appointed to school A in April 1997, following the promotion of the former headteacher the author of this thesis, to another school. The new headteacher had been the deputy in the school during the previous inspection. In June of 1997, two years after the first inspection, the headteacher reported that the school received a letter from Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) of schools, saying that there was to be a follow-up visit to the original inspection eight days later. Further the letter said this was because of serious weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. By telephone, the headteacher tried to

discover what particular aspects were to be discussed, as there had never been any suggestion of serious weaknesses or failure in the school at the last inspection, except for a passing reference to value for money (see Chapter 5). The headteacher described his conversation with the Inspector as “animated” but he did not feel that he had elicited any further information from HMI as to why the visit should take place.

The headteacher was very confident that a mistake had been made and so he treated the visit very matter-of-factly with the staff. Large amounts of documentation were required by HMI prior to the visit. The head decided to involve the Local Education Authority (LEA) in an advisory capacity. The HMI visit went ahead but was described as ‘cursory’ according to the head. No programme was asked for by HMI for the visit and none was set by the head but the teacher of RE was observed for part of a lesson. RE had not fulfilled the legal requirements in 1995. At the end of the day oral feedback from the HMI to the headteacher did not suggest there were any particular problems that would have triggered another OFSTED inspection.

In August 1997, the headteacher received another letter from OFSTED. The letter said that the school was in difficulties, categorised as having ‘serious weaknesses’ and there were sufficient reasons for another visit. Nothing further was heard despite the headteacher’s request for further information. Telephone queries were not responded to. In January 1998, the school was told that there was to be another full inspection in autumn term 1998. Despite serious questioning from the LEA and the school including evidence of what was being seen by the LEA and headteacher as an administrative mistake (there was

evidence that another school of the same name should have been the one inspected), OFSTED did not retract. The headteacher reported during this research that he felt that the visit and then further inspection,

...had side-tracked me from my agenda and not contributed to the school's improvement. I was confident that the school's results in Maths, Science and English were continuing to improve despite OFSTED's visits rather than because of them.

The headteacher was pleased to find that the inspection, scheduled for November 1998, was well organised. Contacts with the Registered Inspector (RgI) were made and meetings held on agreed dates and in accordance with the Framework which had itself changed since 1997. The headteacher had the view that this was a professional team doing their job well.

The headteacher decided to prepare for the next inspection by continuing to work to his agenda rather than be diverted. The priorities for the school at that time were establishing systems and good practice of monitoring and evaluation across the school and improving the quality of teaching and learning and achieving greater cohesion through the implementation of policies. The Framework requires that a large volume of documentation is submitted to OFSTED prior to inspection; this was the third time in three years.

Having decided not to continue to 'fight' the decision to re-inspect, the headteacher set about the management of the process. From the beginning he involved the LEA in a much more active way than had been done during the previous inspection. He had planned the school's priorities for the year and decided that these were not to be changed. He decided that there were two messages that he was going to reiterate on every possible occasion: for the staff it was cohesion and for the children it was pride in the school. The senior staff checked again all the school's documentation and the head issued a memo to all staff reminding them of the requirements. He had also revisited the school's mission statements and written a paper about the school's future direction.

The Registered Inspector's (RgI) level of professionalism impressed the head. The RgI was clear about the job she had to do but also reassured him about the odd way that the inspection had come about. She commented after her walk round the school that she could see no signs of the behavioural difficulties that had been suggested as the reason the school was being reinspected. The head felt that she was to be trusted.

The week before the inspection, the head received faxes by mistake that gave him details of the schedule of visits to classes by the inspectors. He did not want to share these with staff as he realised that they would focus only on these lessons. Other arrangements about meetings were still awaited.

The meeting with the Registered Inspector (RgI) went well. The Chairman of Governors who was the same as for the previous inspection, attended but there was no repetition of

the difficulties experienced on that occasion. In fact the Chairman was little in evidence for this inspection compared to the last. Several times during the meeting, comment was made by the Rgl about how few inspectors had been allotted to this inspection and how fragmented the arrangements had been for the inspectors. The head took the view that the onus would be upon the staff to demonstrate the quality and strength of the school during interviews rather than expect that inspectors would be able to gather all the information for themselves.

A series of faxes with conflicting information and detail that should not have come to him, caused the headteacher to feel anxious on the one hand but he also felt that his professionalism in not revealing it would have been noted by the Rgl.

Governor support for this inspection was very thin. The Chairman of Governors did attend for all the scheduled meetings but the chair of the finance committee had forgotten he had to be interviewed and couldn't attend. The head's view was that this was preferable to the 1995 experience. Further he believed that the atmosphere which surrounded OFSTED inspections generally by 1998 was significantly different; it was much more relaxed for the majority of schools.

The daily reports from staff that the head had instigated began to reveal potential difficulties on day one but there were few of them. The Rgl began to feed back comments to the head from day two and there were many positives. Throughout the head's account, recorded on tape on a daily basis, he emphasised his pleasure at the way that the

inspection was going and the level of competence of the inspectors. He felt positive and not defensive. One inspector was an exception: one specialist inspector did not feed back in the same way as the others. This caused problems for the member of staff concerned and the head in terms of how he was able to work with the staff member after inspection. The staff were good at alerting the head to 'off-the-cuff' remarks from inspectors which were challenged immediately by the head with positive results.

By day three the head was noting the, "...inspector for IT wants to go to a discrete IT model as opposed to across the curriculum, he wants another IT suite". Further as the head noted in his tape diary,

[An] HMI was here today inspecting the inspection team. I had a meeting with him that lasted 40-45 minutes. It could have been 10 minutes for the actual content of it, but I did go over with him ... all the problems we have had with OFSTED and I would be very surprised if he didn't go back now and investigate this himself, because he saw quite clearly the anomalies between our Inspection Report and the serious weaknesses letter and all the subsequent nonsense that took place which I am too bored and tired to talk about tonight, because tonight I am going to watch City stuff Blackburn.

The head also noted that OFSTED had again been troubled in the early stages of the inspection about the open collaborative management style of the school; they wanted it to

be more hierarchical but by the end of the week, the Registered Inspector accepted that the model was working.

Throughout the gruelling inspection and feed back process, the head continued to run the school, teach his lessons and cover the lessons of others whenever necessary.

After the experience of the first inspection when the Rgl had made mistakes in the draft report, the head said that he worked hard to check the 1998 one. Again some changes were made but its quality was generally better than the first so there were fewer. It was said by the head to be a very professional document with which he had few difficulties.

The press report was enthusiastic but as OFSTED was much less of a public issue, generally, the headlines were smaller. There was little comment from the community; this mirrored the previous experience in 1995.

The Action Plan was again written by the staff during a training day, as had been the case in 1995. The governors were involved peripherally. The head had decided that this was appropriate; he reported that the governors were happy to agree.

The headteacher believed that morale in the school could have been badly damaged by the arrival of OFSTED but he had carefully selected the information that he had shared with the staff. They were unaware of all the letters which had passed between the school and OFSTED and unaware of the allegation of 'serious weaknesses'. The atmosphere in

the school was good before the inspection started as they had had an enjoyable parents' evening two days before. The OFSTED party was pre-inspection this time.

From very early in the week, the staff were receiving positive feed back and by the end of the week they were euphoric as the head recorded on his taped diary. There were two members of staff who needed support however: one because he had not prepared himself well enough but the other with significant difficulties, identified by OFSTED, in his area of responsibility. The head had to deal with these differently and planned short-term support followed by longer-term training for the latter. The former was a matter of reminding the teacher of the school's expectations about his performance.

School B, inspected in 1995 and 1998

School B is a mixed comprehensive school with 1700 students aged 14-19. The first inspection took place in January 1995 and the first OFSTED Framework, (revised in May 1994) was used. The same Registered Inspector as in the first inspection of school A was leading the team and many of the problems encountered by school A had also been met by school B including the late arrival of information, failure to meet deadlines and loss of documentation. When interviewed, the head believed the Rgl to have been astute although outwardly disorganised.

During interview for this research, the headteacher reported that he had prepared the school (teachers, support staff, governors, students and parents) for the inspection, by involvement in the local subject liaison groups (Vann, 1998) and by involving the LEA in

pre-inspection seminars with teachers and Governors. The headteacher said that he had sought support from his colleague heads in the LEA and attended a seminar organised by the Secondary Heads' Association. As the inspection of this school was early in the cycle of inspections, he believed his ability to learn from the experience of others was somewhat limited. He relied upon pastoral and faculty heads to check documentation with the senior management team. The head felt confident about the outcome of the inspection.

This first inspection was reported by the headteacher as being "...fairly low key"; he had decided that the senior management team would manage the week. The day to day running was all handled by them, leaving the head to concentrate upon meeting the inspection team.

The team did not impress the teaching staff. Teachers found the team to be unresponsive; the inspectors did not give them feed back (the Framework did not require it at that time). Although the week seemed to go well on the surface, some staff were very anxious about the issues that were being raised: the underachievement of boys for example. Teachers also felt that the senior managers had not prepared them sufficiently for what was to come.

The oral feed back sessions were conducted with the senior management team present but Heads of Faculty felt that they were unprepared for the level of criticism they experienced. The head reported that he had been trying for some years to change attitudes and had been anticipating that the OFSTED visit would speed progress by

highlighting the difficulties with staff, called 'obstruction' by a governor of the school, that he was experiencing.

The draft report in this first inspection was arrived at after amicable discussion with inspectors but not without some changes in phraseology. Having been accepted by the senior team and governors, it was put out to the staff who were very despondent about its main findings and key issues. In interview for this research, the head was jovial in his approach to what had taken place and to the report.

The newspaper article that subsequently appeared represented some of the criticisms in the report but was basically supportive. There was no major outcry from parents or governors. The Registered Inspector recruited the head in a private capacity to give presentations upon the OFSTED process for the inspection company that he owned.

The Action Plan was written by the senior team and put out for consultation to all Heads of Faculty and other responsibility postholders. The governors were consulted but were not involved in the writing of it. The staff were not happy at the way the criticisms which ranged over a number of areas, seemed to culminate in a single strategy: to undertake a major restructuring of the school. The staff proposed alternative strategies but the head and governors did not accept these.

It was reported that the staff were disappointed by the outcomes and, as in many schools, depressed as a result of the process. At the same time the head and deputies applied to

the governors for a sizeable pay rise. This was eventually withdrawn but caused major unhappiness amongst the staff. In the weeks that followed there was a downturn in recruitment for the school; some members of the community saw the OFSTED report as a contributory factor. An extensive period of difficulty for the school began.

The second inspection of school B in 1998 was carried out under the 1996 Framework revision which allowed inspectors to provide feedback to the school in order, so OFSTED hoped, to aid improvement and development.

The headteacher decided that he would resign rather than go through the process again. A deputy was appointed as acting headteacher for the following two terms which included the OFSTED process. Similar to the second inspection of school A, there was some controversy about this one. Enclosed with the letter notifying the school of the inspection was documentation that said the school was to be inspected as it had “been identified as a failing school” in the 1994 report. The Governors challenged this allegation as being without foundation and it was removed from the documentation. One of the key issues from the previous inspection had been a criticism of the organisation of management and as a result wholesale restructuring had taken place; some staff had lost their jobs and morale was said by the acting head to have been very low. The acting head believed that the staff had “blamed” the previous head rather than OFSTED for the changes but he felt this to be unfair.

When interviewed the acting head was cheerful about his role in the preparation period but identified that the school did have problems that did not give him confidence about the outcomes of OFSTED. The preparations that were undertaken by the acting head for the second inspection were very different from the actions of the headteacher in 1995. He tried to predict what the issues were likely to be, successfully he believed, and prepared evidence for the inspection team concerning those issues. He named the school's rate of exclusions, attendance and examination results as examples of areas he had worked on. The evidence he prepared was school based data for the most part which helped him to contextualise levels of attendance and examination results which were at or below the national average and exclusion rates that were marginally higher than the national average.

The acting head believed that he had played a much more active role in the school's inspection in 1998 than had been the case in 1995. He said that he gave time to the more thorough preparation of the staff and the governors. He believed that the staff was not as negative to the OFSTED process this time due to the departure of the previous head. The acting head thought that they had looked to him for guidance and reassurance after the period of turbulence that had been a feature of the school since the last inspection. On this occasion, he believed that the senior management team had worked alongside the teachers to a greater degree. The acting head said that he had had "a marvellous time" during the inspection and that he believed that the staff had "been grateful" to him during the inspection.

During the inspection, the staff were reported to have accepted the conversations between inspectors and themselves more readily because the conversations were seen as “more professional”. Inspectors concentrated upon attainment; the teachers thought, “It was a professional agenda”.

Interviewed again after the inspection week, the acting head felt that the main findings and key issues for action highlighted by the inspection team were fair. The oral feedback indicated that the report would be very critical of levels of attainment but recognised progress from the previous inspection. The management issues that had been acted upon by the previous head no longer featured but lines of communication and the accountability of staff at the senior management level was unfavourably commented upon again. The head made few challenges to the draft and those made were of a minor nature.

Although he had worked in the school for many years, the acting head clearly felt detached from the process. He did not feel personally involved in the same way that other heads have reported. This was possibly because the new head had been appointed and the staff were very aware that they needed to do well in the inspection at a critical time in the school.

The acting head saw the inspection team as being, “Very professional”. Timings had been kept to and, “Conversations which helped the school to develop were agreeable and professionally sound”. Two meetings a day, at 7am and 1pm, were held between the head and Registered Inspector (Rgl). The Lay inspector was the Rgl’s wife which was the

subject of comment from the staff, their perception was that the Lay inspector would not be as independent as she should have been. The teachers felt that the oral feed back to subject staff was good. It did not substantially alter in the written report. [The teachers believed that there had been considerable alteration in the 1995 report from favourable comments to criticisms but this may have been the difference, noted elsewhere, between the enthusiastic language used in oral feedbacks and the more banal tone of the written reports].

The acting head noted, "The second inspection appeared to have nothing to do with the first and we could have put the first report on the discount pile." He believed that this was not because all the issues raised in the first had been addressed, it was rather that the national agenda had shifted. [Examination of the two reports would suggest that indeed there is more emphasis on attainment but this was a major issue in the first report too.]

The press report was low key but positive with no further comment being reported by the acting head from the community or parents.

The acting headteacher was unequivocal; he wrote the Action Plan alone. He gave drafts of it to the senior management team, the staff and the governors but having received no comments from them, it was sent off to OFSTED. He felt justified in this approach because the inspection and the response to it was a, "...professional agenda", in his view. He did not report any dissent from other stakeholder groups.

Unlike school A, the acting head did not find the LEA helpful. He did not have any contact from them until shortly before the Inspection was to begin. He had not, however, asked for help from them. The acting head reported that an advisor alerted him to the very issues that he had already been working on as predictable concerns for the inspection team, two days before the inspection was to begin. Apart from preparing himself with statistical data, this headteacher did not report any additional preparation that he had undertaken with staff, parents or governors.

School C, inspected 1996

School C is a junior school for children aged 7-11. There were approximately 200 children on roll. The school was inspected in 1996 a year after the headteacher took up post. It was his third headship. The Inspection was conducted under the revised Framework but as it was scheduled 'at Easter'; the school was unsure during the lead in time whether their inspection would be under the revised Framework or the previous one. (The revised Framework began after Easter, 1996.)

This inspection was late in the first cycle of inspections by OFSTED so the school was to be inspected by an Additional Team (AT). This was a team of people made up at least in part by headteachers or similar senior staff from other schools geographically separate from the one being inspected. The ATs had come into existence because OFSTED could not recruit sufficient people to cope with the large number of Inspections of primary schools. Very often members of ATs had little experience and had not worked together before. They were on secondment from their posts and have been called 'car park teams'

by schools being inspected, that is, they met for the first time in the car park of the school they were to inspect.

The AT had only had 6-8 weeks notification of the actual date of the inspection of school C. The head was concerned that the team had not had sufficient time in his view to read all the information about the school, to train as a team or to train as inspectors. He was also concerned that as few other schools in the area had had a similar team, he could not learn much from the experience of colleagues.

The head recognised that he had been quite detached when he first heard of the inspection. He had thought that it would be helpful to him as he took up the post. In fact he then began to realise, "My name would be on the front of the report, no matter how long I had been in the school, and that made it personal for me." He began to resent that after a successful career spanning twenty years he was going to be externally judged by a team that he did not respect.

The head reported that staff attitudes to inspection varied from the pragmatic to those who were very anxious. The head brought a colleague head in to speak to the staff and also involved the LEA primary advisor. All the governors attended a briefing but the head did not give detailed briefings to those governors who would be interviewed by the inspectors. The parents were told on many occasions, including the evening of the school play, that inspection was taking place and he expected them to attend the parents' meeting. He and the staff accessed their personal networks but a recurring comment alarmed him, "That's

what it was like for us, but it depends upon what team you get.” He still felt very much on his own.

The head was notified by phone on April 12 1996 that his inspection would begin on May 20th. The Rgl set the first meeting for April 26 at which she wanted all the documentation, including the completed headteacher’s form. Clearly anxious about the various aspects of the inspection including the composition of the AT inspection team, the head was more alarmed when the headteacher’s form did not arrive. After many phone calls the form arrived but with only four days left before it needed to be handed in. The headteacher felt that he, “...made a mess of it”, because it was done in such a rush. He expressed concern about why the school had to do this highly technical paper and was suspicious of OFSTED’s need for the information. He did, however, write a statement, “...from the heart”, reflecting the context of the school and raising the issues that he felt were important to the development of the school.

The head did not allow the staff to spend additional hours on beautifying the school, displays were already of a high standard, or writing extra policies. Instead they consolidated the policies that already existed and ensured that their planning documents were well developed.

At the initial meeting with the Rgl, the head felt that he had allowed all his thoughts about the school to, “...gush out”. He felt that the Rgl was quite knowing and astute. He recognised the thoughts that he had expressed in this first meeting emerged in the final

report but he believed that during the inspection they were not pursued because he had already brought them out into the open. He felt confident about the inspection week after this first meeting.

He turned his negative thoughts to a positive outcome in that he realised that the staff could be feeling as he was. He set up a noticeboard with the Question of the Day on it. This helped staff to ask anything and receive an answer; this he felt was good preparation for the questions that inspectors would ask. He said,

What I did find in preparation was they seemed to think that I had all the knowledge and you would get messages, "Richard, the special needs staff want to know what questions they are going to be asked." I would like to know what questions we're going to be asked. And I would reply, "They will be asked questions about the job that they are doing." I didn't know but it was assumed that I had got all this information and somehow I was keeping it to myself at times, to scare them or to keep them on their toes or something. Well, I didn't have the information. I was as vulnerable as them and I knew that I was going to be a major target.

The 'team', an AT team, arrived although it was the first time that they had met each other; they had not known until two days before that they would be working together. The Rgl commented to the head at lunchtime on the first day, "We're getting on well together, we've known each other for two and a half hours now". The head approached the situation by accepting that they had got a 'hotch-potch' of people. He didn't doubt that they were professional and talented but still having to concentrate on their own preparation

and in making their 'team' gel. However the head recognised that the inspection was compact. As in school A's first inspection the parents' meeting was held within the inspection week. He liked this and felt that he was at an advantage in that he could put pressure on the team.

I did that purposely; I actually put pressure on them all the time. When they made a suggestion, I countered it. I stretched out the tour of the school to include work sampling.... Now obviously that put pressure on them because I had arranged curriculum co-ordinator meetings for after school and they had got the parents' meeting at 7pm so I was compressing their day, I was actually in control and the curriculum co-ordinators were met in the classrooms so they were on familiar territory... and it was all putting pressure on. I was able to do that with that additional team because they weren't able to do the groundwork beforehand and they were new to the school so they had to absorb everything about the school and keep all these deadlines that we had set.

The head expressed the view that he managed the inspection that he was, "...in control." He likened it to a football match in which he only occasionally lost the ball. He recognised that there was a power struggle going on during the week between him and the team but that it took a strong personality such as his to be able to do this. However he showed sensitivity to the position of class teachers who he said, "...were on their own [during the inspection], I couldn't do anything to help them."

The inspection team were seen as being, "Nice people", but the head was irritated that he did not get feedback on the assembly he did on the first day. Also he noted the, "OFSTED screen," which he saw as being the disengagement of inspectors with staff at the point that a professional discussion was taking place. He did not feel that the inspection was developmental as feedback was within an artificial context.

At the start of every day, the head was given a timetable of the inspectors' activities. Communication with the team was good, including such comments as, "Yesterday was a good day, you can tell the staff that they did really well". The team did feedback to staff and the head comments about individual lessons but the head was critical of the way that classroom observations were used numerically to make a cumulative judgement about the standards of teaching. This is part of the OFSTED methodology.

The headteacher was very annoyed by the way that individual teachers in this junior school could be identified in the written report; if there is only one teacher teaching IT for example, their identification is clear. He tried very hard to change the language such that the teachers were shielded from what he felt was unjustified criticism. The head was also annoyed by the criticism of the responsibility point structure [teachers' pay] that he had inherited from the previous head. There were difficulties of timing of the draft report but the Registered Inspector (Rgl) resolved these to the head's satisfaction. In fact the report was excellent and very positive about the school and his personal leadership but the headteacher was disparaging about both the report and its professional standing. He

believed that there had been little real grasp of the report, its implications and what had been missed.

The media were very impressed by the school's report and the parents and the local community applauded the inspection success. The head clearly enjoyed this and built upon it. There was, "...a good deal of back slapping", and the head received a pay rise. The head was pleased with the public affirmation of what he was doing but he was scathing about its importance to the community, he said,

How many people, how many of my parent body have actually come in and requested the full report? Nil. And this is a catchment area of people that actually care and take an interest. What about in some of the schools where the summary of the report is obviously enough for them?

The Action Plan was written with a small team of teachers, governors and the head working with an advisor from the LEA. It was planned in the summer holidays and submitted to OFSTED within the 40 day period. No difficulties were reported by the head with this process except that, in his words, the governors showed little understanding of what was required.

The morale of the staff was said by the head to be good at all times although it was a, "...traumatic week". The head said that he did his best to ensure that the staff were supported and 'protected' as he saw it but he said,

[Inspectors]...making judgements that can affect the future of that school, the relationship with the parents and the community and a headteacher's and teachers' professional careers are on the line. I felt that my whole status and my whole twenty years or so in the profession was under the spotlight and under scrutiny and at risk for the sake of those days that they were in here and that's crazy.

The head said that at one stage in the week he realised that he was tired of it. He felt the weight of the process and was depressed by the idea that the week itself is only a small part of the whole thing. Action Planning and numerous meetings were still to come. He was aware of having to keep on top of anything that happened that week. In fact two boys played truant and this led to the police being involved but the way it was handled was commented upon positively by the inspectors.

Further he talked of OFSTED as being a bruising experience, "We're all tired, we're shattered, it's bruised us." At a later date he reported that the staff, "Went through a period of mourning", even though they had had a good report. When the mourning stopped, the staff, "Switched off," but there was what he called a 'spooky' interest in the inspection of other schools, "They devoured the reports [of others] like piranhas". He was saddened too by a tendency to dismiss the few criticisms that there were in their own report and to talk in competitive terms of other schools.

School D, inspected 1995

This mixed comprehensive school for 560 students aged 11-14 had a very different experience from that of the others in the study. The school was asked to be a pilot school for the revised Framework that was eventually introduced in April 1996. They were inspected in the summer of 1995 but were notified of their inspection in May 1994, a whole year before the event. As a 'pilot' school and unlike the other schools in the study, the head reported that in every way the school had been kept informed, had been supported and had been helped by OFSTED and by the LEA. She said it was, "A model period of preparation which matched the development planning process". As head she wrote a paper for Heads of Department within the school that centred upon their management role. Similarly to the other schools, she did all the background work with Governors herself. LEA advisors were brought in to work alongside members of the teaching staff, partially because it reduced the load on the head and her deputy but also because it allowed the 'message' of what OFSTED was about, to be coming from more than one source.

The head reported that she had, "Total confidence in [the] professionalism of the team." She found that they had status, credibility, were skilled but were also sensitive. She believed that all the inspectors, with one exception, had good subject knowledge but some of them had, "...relatively little experience of school management...whilst some had significant insights of school management." Given that the Framework was new, the head was not surprised at the level of inexperience within the team. She was disappointed at the lack of clarity that was a result. It seemed that the team was more concerned with a holistic view of the school than in helping the school to improve.

The head felt that there was a greater need for the relationship between the head and the Registered Inspector to be good because of the conversational elements of the revised Framework that was to include the feedback of judgements. She was surprised that the team did not appear to have had specific training in how to manage the feedback sessions with teachers nor in how to guide the conversations so that development could result. There was no supporting documentation either that might have been helpful to the inspectors in her view. However as this inspection was a 'pilot' HMI were to follow it up and evaluate it.

The head reported that once the process was underway, she was working very hard to keep everything going. She felt that the period of the inspection was abnormal and at its completion all the school wanted to do was to, "...return to normality". The head felt that OFSTED was a valuable process but not as a one-off 'snap-shot' of the school. She felt that the inspection week was a 'performance' and that they had performed well. The head had experienced an HMI Inspection previously and believed that that had had more credibility.

Surprisingly, the head noted that even though the school had been prepared for inspection by the LEA to a higher degree than would have been usual, there was still a lot of stress and emotion surrounding the process, feedback sessions in particular. She said that feedback from inspectors was clear and supportive of the staff but there were still tears and emotional upsets amongst the teachers when oral reports were made.

The headteacher's Chairman of Governors was supportive and made contact at least once every day as well as being present for his interviews with inspectors. The head did not report any involvement of the governors with the actual process of the inspection, except their interviews.

The draft report was lacking in controversy, possibly because it was a pilot for the revision of the Framework, which appeared in 1996. The head was very matter-of-fact about the inspection outcomes; there were no contentious key issues.

There was some press interest in the school's report. It was supportive and celebratory but because this inspection was different from others, the head felt unhappy with this. She believed that the school had experienced an unusual inspection compared to what other schools had or would experience and therefore to be publicly celebratory was unwarranted. [Her suspicion was that if the inspection had led to strident criticisms, the LEA would have withdrawn their support for OFSTED and perhaps suppressed the report.]

The Action Plan was again a matter of course for the school. A small committee of staff, including senior management and governors produced the document that was sent to OFSTED after comment from the full Governing Body and the full staff.

Whilst the head noted the stress and emotion associated with oral feedback sessions, she also reported that there was a minimum of difficulty in terms of staff morale with the actual inspection. She felt this was due to the school, under her headship, having previously

experienced a full HMI inspection. This was unusual as few schools were inspected in their entirety before the OFSTED process began. She believed that her own approach to the inspection: open but not taking it too seriously, probably affected how others viewed it. She acknowledged that the outcomes for her school were dissimilar than those for other schools.

The headteacher felt that after the inspection there had been, “An understandable desire to return to normality”. She was content that they seemed to be doing a good job.

Given the different approaches towards the inspection of their schools by the headteachers it is not surprising that they took differing approaches to subsequent decision-making. The principal decisions are listed below with the exception of School D which professed no specific decisions made, outside their existing plans, because it was a ‘pilot’ inspection.

**Decisions made by school A (1995), School B (1995, 1998)
and school C (1996) in the immediate post inspection period.**

It is interesting to note the decisions that were made by the above schools following their inspections. It has not been possible to collect a similar level of information from all the schools in the study or on every occasion after inspection.

School A, 1995

1. The support staff and teaching staff structures were reviewed.
2. The head's role and that of her deputy were reviewed and redefined.
3. Teachers' non-contact time was reduced, an issue not identified prior to inspection.
4. The support staff had new job descriptions and two redundancies resulted.
5. Responsibility points were reviewed, an issue not identified prior to inspection.
6. The provision of RE teaching and the time allowance for it were reviewed and new RE teacher appointed.
7. Time allowance for Music was reviewed but no increase was possible.
8. The Governors accepted plans for an IT suite and distinct IT teaching on the timetable.
9. Development planning was intended to be more long term but budgetary insecurity still promoted short-term thinking

10. Job descriptions of middle and senior managers were enhanced to include specific monitoring and evaluation activities, an issue not identified in this way before inspection.
11. With the head or deputy, all heads of department worked through the comments in their own subject reports and the oral feed backs with particular reference to standards of achievement at the higher level of ability.
12. New definitions of responsibilities were outlined between the head and the governors.

School B, 1994

1. Management was to be fundamentally restructured to give more responsibility to middle managers. Some redundancies and significant changes in status (as seen by the staff) resulted. OFSTED said that lines of accountability and communication were too long and the school lacked strategic management.
2. The staff appraisal scheme was to be rewritten.
3. More delegation of decision-making to middle managers.
4. Senior management team was to be enhanced and responsibilities reviewed to increase levels of strategic management.

5. The senior management team applied for sizeable pay increases.
6. The quality of teaching was to be improved from a level where only 75% were seen as satisfactory to be improved; again the responsibility of middle managers.
7. Increase the length of the taught day.

School B, 1998

1. Levels of attainment, particularly at the end of Key Stage 4 (GCSE results) were reviewed and strategies devised to raise them.
2. The transition arrangements between high schools and School B were reviewed and enhanced to address issues of continuity and progression.
3. The increased quality of teaching from the 1994 inspection was built upon.
4. Issues of low morale resulting from the restructuring post the 1994 inspection and still incomplete, were tackled.
5. The levels of fixed term exclusions were reviewed and strategies devised to lower the levels.

6. The school's attendance policies were reviewed given OFSTED's perception that attendance was poor.
7. The potential for complacency from the teaching staff was discussed.

School C, 1996

1. An audit of time allowances for subjects in the timetable was undertaken; no change was made.
2. The responsibility allowances were reviewed but nothing could be done about the perceived imbalance until staff left the school, as employment law did not allow changes of this kind.
3. Enhanced IT provision was planned when finance allowed IT lessons were delivered at the local secondary school as their machines were more suitable. This probably would not have happened if inspection had not taken place.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter the inspection data collected from the other three case study schools was presented. A detailed description of the second inspection of School A was included. The information was gathered largely from the oral histories of the headteachers, triangulated

as far as possible by external documentation (see Chapter 4) and interviews with participants, very often governors and staff at the schools.

It can be seen that there were differences in approach from the headteachers to the inspection process. These differences and their consequences will be discussed in Chapter 7 but it is probable that other factors were also involved, including: timing of the inspections within the evolution of the OFSTED process; the situation of the schools at the time of their inspections; the relationships between stakeholders within the schools; the community's perception of the school; and, the personal disposition of the headteacher towards the OFSTED process.

It could be argued that the inconsistencies in the OFSTED process as experienced by these schools and the lack of credibility with which the teachers and senior staff in the schools greeted the OFSTED inspectors affected the outcomes from the inspections and the willingness of schools to accept them. These issues will also be discussed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7: Differences in inspection and their consequences

Introduction

In Chapters 5 and 6 the data collected from the four case study schools was presented. There were differences in approach from the headteachers to the inspection process. This chapter will discuss the differences that were noted and their possible consequences. It will critically reflect upon the data from Chapters 5 and 6, in particular the behaviour of the headteachers. It will first discuss: the personal disposition of the headteachers towards the OFSTED process; the behaviour of the headteachers; the relevance or not of the timing of the inspections within the evolution of the OFSTED process; the situation of the schools at the time of their inspections; the relationships between stakeholders within the schools, particularly the apparent marginalisation of the governors from the process; and the communities' perceptions of the schools.

The chapter will then highlight: the inconsistencies in the OFSTED process as experienced by the study schools, the lack of credibility given to the OFSTED process by some teachers and senior staff in the schools and the manner in which the schools acknowledged the validity of the inspection judgements.

Next, the mantra for the Office for Standards in Education is 'Improvement through Inspection' is examined. Despite what is often heard from headteachers, "OFSTED didn't tell us anything we didn't already know", it can be shown from the data presented in Chapters 5 and 6, triangulated by external documentation in Chapters 2 and 3, that the

schools that were inspected were able to move forwards and improve their educational services to children, parents and the community as a result of their inspection experience. However, the schools would also argue that some of the main findings or key issues identified by OFSTED were already being addressed; this can be seen to be true.

Finally, the critical importance of action planning post inspection is discussed before the chapter is summarised and conclusions drawn.

The discussion that follows is informed by comment from the headteachers of the four case study schools, one of the Registered Inspectors involved in the inspections of two of the case study schools, by a researcher from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), and by one of the chairmen of governors from a case study school.

Personal disposition of the headteachers towards the OFSTED inspection.

As noted above, there had been considerable discussion in the media concerning school inspections, much of it derogatory of both schools and the process, depending upon the point of view. Inspection was seen by the headteachers of Schools A (1995) and C with admitted trepidation. Partially, this was lack of confidence in the process (School C in particular) and partially because of the anxiety about the potential outcomes (School A). The other schools showed no particular predisposition prior to the first inspection, indeed

it could be said that School D was very relaxed about it, given that it was a 'pilot' for the framework.

School D was in the fortunate position of having received significant help in preparation for their inspection from both OFSTED itself and from the LEA. The school also had a full year within which to do the preparation; it was a 'model period for preparation' according to the head. This was so that they could evaluate the changes that were proposed for the revised Framework that was published at Easter 1996. According to the headteacher, there was no pressure upon the school to 'perform' well. It could have been for this reason or maybe because the headteacher felt that the Registered Inspector and team had 'status but also had credibility'. She found that they were very skilled but also had sensitivity. She had 'total confidence in their professionalism', especially in their subject specialism. (A lack of subject specialism and knowledge was an issue with other inspection teams.) She reported however that even when the feedback sessions were clear and supportive of staff and the reports were good, there were still tears and reports of emotional upset. This could be seen as an indication of the level of stress that most teachers experienced in relation to OFSTED inspection at that time, no matter how carefully they had been prepared for it.

As far as OFSTED itself was concerned the head felt that the process was partially effective as an accountability mechanism. She felt that it satisfied "Government and national needs, parents' [needs] and governors' [needs]." But she felt that there was a large input of resources and there was little reassurance that the picture presented by the

report of the school would lead to increased resources to help improvement. Neither did she think that there was any evidence that inspection improved schools, per say.

As described above, the headteacher of school C was angry at the intrusion, as he saw it, by OFSTED into his school. He said that he had been matter-of-fact with the staff about the OFSTED visit and did not do anything that could have added to the pressure upon the staff. The pressure that he felt was clear; he likened it to having a tooth out.

The headteacher believed that the language of OFSTED was foreign to most parents. He suggested that the background of the parents was influential in this respect; the affluent parents were likely to have been the opinion formers and to have made the judgements of whether it was a 'good' school.

Recollecting the inspection week, the headteacher of school C said that he was tired of the 'whole thing', was 'bored' with the mechanical process of feedback, action planning and reporting to the community. He noted that the time it had taken meant it went into a new academic year but that he felt he was still dealing with the 'old' academic year which had little relevance to the school so many months further on.

The head at school B (1995) had remained at a distance to the inspection in a number of ways. He had given much of the day to day running of the inspection to the senior management team. He was surprised by the criticism of the lines of accountability in the school; the report said they were too long. However in his discussion following inspection for the purposes of this study, he seemed oblivious to the difficulties that had been

highlighted by the inspection. The restructuring that resulted brought the school to the verge of strike action by teaching staff, exacerbated by the senior team's application to the governors for a pay rise. It could be said the headteacher never recovered from this situation; in 1998 he resigned rather than face a new inspection.

Following the second inspection of School B, the acting headteacher again painted a picture for this research which was content with the outcomes and expressed pleasure with the way the inspection had gone. [A subsequent inspection in 2002 which does not form part of this study, noted that little that had been highlighted in 1995 or 1998 by inspection had been achieved and standards in the school had declined. The second headteacher, appointed in 1998, resigned and the school was put into 'Special Measures', that is, it had failed and a 'caretaker' head was put in place by the LEA.]

It could be argued that the heads in post at School B in 1995 and 1998 did not recognise the seriousness of the situation or bring about the action that was needed due to lack of skill, or that they just failed to take action. It could also be an example of the size of the task being too great for the staff in post to carry out. This study can only conjecture as there has been no systematic collection of data or analysis on this issue.

The inspection report for school A (1998) reinforced the views taken by the head and deputy of the school in 1995 in that it commented favourably on the way that the school had progressed and improved since the last inspection. It particularly noted those aspects which constituted the key issues of the 1995 report. Whilst the heads were anxious about the process and outcomes in 1995 and 1998, the reasons were very

different (see above). By the end of the process in 1998, the headteacher was becoming personally indifferent to it. He did not recognise the reasons for the inspection as being well-founded and thought it was likely to have little to contribute to his school improvement plans. [A subsequent inspection in 2003 entirely vindicated his approach at that time.]

All the headteachers in the study were, on the surface, keen to avoid stress to their staff. However it is clear that some were also using the inspection to give them evidence to enable pressure to be applied to produce change. This was true of School A (staffing changes), School B (staffing changes and restructuring) and School C (staffing changes and increased budget for capitation).

By the time of the second inspections, the headteachers had become more resigned to the longevity of OFSTED; the Conservative government had an overt agenda of improving schools through compulsion and the Labour position as expressed by Blair's Ruskin speech in December 1996, spoke of 'zero' tolerance of school underperformance and school failure.

Blair also said, "One of this [Conservative] government's biggest mistakes has been to take the excesses of a few teachers as an excuse to pillory the whole profession." From the evidence of this study, the headteachers and many of the staff in their schools believed that the schools and themselves were being inspected for punitive rather than developmental, school improvement, reasons.

To summarise, the predisposition of the headteachers can be seen to relate to: the context of the school ; the attitude of the headteacher to the process, including their own beliefs about the value of inspection and the inspection process; and, the headteachers' understanding of the improvement required in their schools.

Behaviour of the headteachers

From the evidence presented it can be seen that the headteachers brought very different styles and approaches to their inspections. Two of the headteachers exhibited anxiety about the process and an awareness of the possible outcomes for the school if inspection was seen as anything other than confirming the school as offering a 'good' education. This is not surprising when considering the educational context of the period 1993 to 1998, which included: overt competition being encouraged between schools; naming and shaming of schools leading to the threat of school closure; prescription in curriculum; increased national testing; the publication of so-called 'League Tables' of examination results; and, the development of the inspection regime. In addition, the change of Government in 1997 from the Conservative party seen by teachers as anti-education to the Labour government which had education as its main political theme, did not change any aspect of the way OFSTED worked or, according to the schools in this study, its affect upon them.

An OFSTED inspector and ex HMI interviewed for this study in 1996 said, the HMI system of inspection, in existence before OFSTED but seen in only a few schools, was responsive to need. Headteachers may have described it as benign but few had

experienced it. In the interview reported in Chapter 2, the HMI took the view that schools only had themselves to blame if they had failed to react to the issue of school improvement; HMI publications were freely available at the time to help them. He believed that OFSTED was a government response to the need for a more systematic and regular gathering of information from schools to inform its policy, planning and direction. Accountability issues were moving through society but education had remained largely untouched.

The headteacher of School C in the study demonstrated the tension discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 between accountability to society and professional accountability. He understood that schools should be accountable for their share of the public purse but did not believe that that gave the government the right to make judgements about his performance and that of his school in a public document. The other headteachers in the study did not express their disquiet in the same way to inspection per say; their objections were about the process as they experienced it.

As noted in Chapter 3, the Conservative government of the time gave great power to the notion of demonstrating value for money across all aspects of public service; education could not be an exception. In this respect, the key test of effective inspection was seen as the extent to which it enhanced the education of the children whilst giving value for money. Headteacher C clearly rejected the concept of the 'audit society'.

Tensions associated with educational accountability (Kogan, 1986) were in evidence in the behaviour of some of the heads in this study. The heads knew and accepted that they were accountable for what went on in their schools but were at times stressed and sometimes angry at the way in which they felt their work was to be judged. It would appear that they had the power to discharge their accountability but as the study has shown, they felt they were not always able to discharge their accountability due to factors such as their newness in post (School C), difficulties with significant staff (School A, 1995) or a different perception from OFSTED of what needed to be achieved (School A, 1995 and 1998; School B, 1995).

With the exception of the headteacher of School B post inspection in 1995, none of the heads in this study tried to use 'institutional force'; they preferred to work with their staff to achieve the changes that they believed were necessary.

Perhaps the evidence of this study is that the headteachers were reflecting the natural tensions attached to running an organisation such as a school. They had, perhaps inevitably, assumed a personal and intense relationship with the institution: the success of the headteachers in their role as leaders was directly associated with the success of the institution in their minds and in the perceptions of the community.

Kogan predicted the problem of policy that the Conservative government solved by the introduction of OFSTED after it was perceived that self-evaluation methods such as the Cambridge Accountability Project (Elliott, 1979) had failed to bring about improvement in the standards of education being experienced by the majority of children. Headteacher C believed that he had the experience and the knowledge to make the necessary changes at

the school, without needing an OFSTED inspection to tell him. Given that no new issues emerged from the inspection other than the issue of staff pay, it would seem that he was right.

There was a belief amongst some headteachers, exemplified by headteacher C, that the traditional accountabilities such as creating a happy school where children enjoy going and learning happens were sufficient.

Given that all of the headteachers in this study began their teaching in the era that would subscribe to the idea that 'formalising good feelings spoils them' (Kogan, 1986), it is possible that their predisposition would have been against the prescription that was prevalent in the middle to late 1990s, particularly in the form of OFSTED. On several occasions the headteachers said that they were 'happy' with the OFSTED process however. It could be argued that in some instances, School A (1995) and C (1996) for example, the headteachers' behaviour suggested that they thought differently.

However, the headteachers interviewed also had clear views of the purpose of OFSTED. They understood the reason for a public accountability process. One talked of the school being a, "Public service in receipt of large amounts of public funds and therefore [it] should be open to public scrutiny." And again that, "It's a very valuable process for a headteacher to have someone external looking at the work of the school and giving some external perspective to it."

Another said, that their OFSTED week was a, “Jolly good thing”, very affirming and “The best week of my time at the college”. He also put forward the view that, “As far as we are concerned it has encouraged us [the senior managers] to be much more accountable ourselves. I am accountable as head and therefore so are the staff.”

These examples indicate that the headteachers were also reflecting upon their need for accountability and external validation of internal processes, including the teaching and learning, in their schools. One head spoke for others when she said that,

I’ve counted on this happening. I’ve felt that the work I’ve been doing in school for the last five years [towards school improvement] has been part of a continuum, evolutionary rather than revolutionary. I was beginning to feel the need for someone else to look at what we’ve achieved and to give me and my thoughts a steer.

In summary the behaviour of the headteachers demonstrates that they were not antipathetic to the concept of accountability or to the idea of being inspected. They did feel the need for an outside view of their work that could aid their own efforts to improve their schools. Some in the study did, however, see the OFSTED process as lacking professionalism, lacking rigour and lacking purpose in terms of school improvement. They showed a range of emotions from extreme anxiety, to calm, and, to anger.

All demonstrated a professional approach to the process when in a public forum but some reflected a more robust approach in private.

Timing of the inspections within the evolution of the OFSTED process

A feature of the inspections reported here was the potential confusion caused to schools because they were unclear about which of the Frameworks would be used to inspect them. They were also unclear about the purpose of OFSTED, was it an accountability mechanism for auditing purposes or was it a developmental tool to help them improve their school?

In the early inspections, prior to Easter 1996, (School A and B, first inspections) OFSTED inspectors were not allowed to give oral feedback to teachers whose lessons they had been observing. Neither were they allowed to offer a perspective on what they had seen. Schools thought that both activities would have been helpful to them in their goal of school improvement.

School A (1995) was fortunate in that the Registered Inspector did offer some guidance and was willing to discuss the management issues in particular with the headteacher and deputy. This was reported as helpful. Tension amongst the teachers was reported in school B when feedback was not given in 1995.

The early Framework did not give clear guidance on what inspectors were looking for when inspecting schools and observing lessons. The addition of this information from 1996 gave schools a clearer perspective of what school improvement looked like; they had an outline, missing from the earlier Framework, against which they could measure their performance.

In some ways the early Framework could be said to be responsible for much of the atmosphere that surrounded inspection in the early days, 1993-95. Schools thought OFSTED inspection was a punitive process, not developmental. The reported inconsistencies of inspection and inspection teams were highlighted in newspaper reports and television documentaries. This added to the air of anxiety which was demonstrated in the case study schools.

In summary, in respect of the timing of the inspections there was a huge disparity between School D which had a year's notice of the actual date of inspection and School A (1995) which had 19 working days. A second difference was the tone and atmosphere which surrounded the inspection: some of these schools did have conversations with inspectors; others didn't before the changed Framework, but the judgements made were published as part of the process and remained as 'evidence' of the school's quality until the next inspection which could have been four years away.

When the Framework changed, beginning in 1996, allowing the inspectors to talk to teachers and headteachers to help them improve their school, the air of suspicion was such that the impact for good was diminished. However, the 'evidence' that the headteachers in the study had was of a disorganised approach by the inspection teams and by OFSTED as an organisation, poor credentials for doing the inspectorial role, including a lack of subject knowledge, poor use of the documentation provided by the schools, and poor understanding of the individuality of schools, for example in their management models. This 'evidence' provided a backcloth of anxiety and tension. Inspection was being done to them not with them; their reaction was personal.

The situation of the schools at the time of their inspections

The OFSTED Framework in use in 1995 and 1996 made no allowances for the differing situations of schools; it made no account of the journey being travelled by the school, its rate of progress or the likelihood of success. The inspection was freely described as a 'snapshot'.

The only way that headteachers could influence the agenda of what was to be inspected or could bring evidence of the school's point of development was through the Headteacher's Statement, a statutory pre-requisite to inspection. Acknowledging that there is argument about the definition of 'successful', the agenda for school improvement if a school is already successful is very different from one which is unsuccessful or one where either the head is new in post or one where the value added measures are low (Stoll and Fink, 1996). Each of the schools in the study had situational factors attached to them that could have affected the inspection outcomes, positively or negatively. The OFSTED 'snapshot' approach in place at that time, could not take any notice of these differences neither could it take any notice of individual issues such as the long-term effect of a teacher's suicide (School A) or issues that emerged during the course of an inspection which led to the sudden absence of a teacher (School A).

One of the main findings of the evaluation of OFSTED carried out by Kogan and Maden (1999) reported in Chapter 2, was that the system was intolerant of alternative approaches to school improvement and effectiveness. School A would have been designated as a failing school between approximately 1990 and 1993 in the OFSTED

terminology employed in later revisions of the Framework. The school was emerging strongly from this by 1995 but it had experienced considerable turbulence amongst the staff and progress was still quite fragile. The headteacher thought it was important that the school, which had formerly been spoken of very disparagingly by the local community emerged from OFSTED inspection with credit. The headteacher, deputy and governors knew that there was a considerable amount of work still to be done in terms of school improvement but they felt that they were making progress. The OFSTED 'snapshot' approach that forbade contextualisation or credit for progress to the date of inspection could have been very destructive, they believed.

The headteacher of school C was angry about inspection and spoke in strident terms possibly because he was an experienced head; it was his third headship and the school was held in very high esteem by the community. He viewed the inspection team as less than professional in its composition and certainly with less experience than he had. He felt at odds with his potential loss of control in his 'own' school. In interview he spoke many times of his methods of trying to manage the inspection during the course of the inspection week. He believed that it was significant that outcomes from the inspection, for example the main finding that highlighted the inappropriacy of the level of pay of some senior responsibility postholders in the school, could not be reacted to because of employment legislation and therefore was an inappropriate finding. He felt that the school did not need the expensive inspection process to inform him of what was obvious to him.

In summary, the failure by the OFSTED process at that time to recognise the differing positions of the schools in terms of their progress or plans for improvement put some of them into a vulnerable position. The lack of sensitivity of the process also allowed schools which should have been attaining a higher level of student achievement for example, given their intake of students, to remain unchallenged.

Headteachers believed that there was an OFSTED ‘template’ or preferred model, of management for example, into which all schools were meant to fit, no matter what their size or chosen style of management. Support for this view was present in two of the case study schools (School A, 1995, and School B, 1995) where the same Registered Inspector made identical criticisms of the schools’ management and offered a very similar model of management as an exemplar even though the two were very different schools. [Close examination of the wording of the two reports for Schools A and B, 1995 also shows great similarity in the reporting of management which supports the view that a formulaic approach had been used.]

The relationships between stakeholders within the schools and the apparent marginalisation of the governors.

When anticipating and planning a successful inspection, it is of greatest significance to schools that the relationship between the teaching staff, principally the head, and the inspectors is good. This was true of the case study schools and is noted in the literature (see Chapter 3). The potential breakdown of this relationship appeared to be one of the factors that was dominating the thinking in school A (1995) when the head changed her

original intention to encourage the inspection of the school to be an “open and inclusive process”.

Staff tended to value inspectors who behaved professionally and who appeared to be in tune with the school’s aims, purposes and values and understood its context. In school A (1995) it appeared that the Chairman of Governors and senior teachers did not value the inspectors and did not see the Registered Inspector as behaving professionally. This could have been in part what led to tensions from some staff during the inspection and unwillingness to ‘own’ the inspection findings.

Teachers found it hard to marry the OFSTED oral feedback sessions that they experienced to the written report. Often the oral feedbacks were enthusiastic, using words like ‘stunning’ and ‘marketable’. These became translated into bland words such as ‘sound’ or ‘satisfactory’; this became known by teachers as ‘OFSTED-speak’. Credibility in OFSTED was lessened as a result. Substance was given to the belief amongst teachers that the reports were computer driven, written to a formula and not to be taken seriously.

In the early inspections the quality of feedback, both oral and written, was seen to be poor by school A and B. It was in keeping with the Framework that existed in 1993 but because a teacher could only ‘receive’ feedback not ‘engage’ in it, it did not receive attention nor was it seen as helpful for improvement even though it was well structured. Oral feedback, allowing engagement and opportunities for discussion and clarification,

only became possible in the later inspections, after 1995, but even then feedbacks were very often rushed and therefore gave negative messages.

Written reports were variable in quality. In 1995, School A reported long periods of time checking them to ensure accuracy and appropriate tone; one subject area had been missing from the original draft. OFSTED monitors written reports but still some are poor, lacking clarity and accessibility to a variety of audiences. The HMCI did suggest that if the reports were not meaningful, schools should put them in the bin; headteachers were shocked by this as it seemed extraordinarily wasteful of public funds at a time when they were very short of basic resources.

At a time of huge change in the education system, teachers felt that the written reports did not give credit to schools when they did things well. They felt that the reports were therefore unbalanced, not giving a rounded picture; it also made it a great deal more likely that a school would not take seriously the criticisms in the report which happened in School B, 1995.

It was apparent in the case study schools that the role of the governors in inspection was to some extent arbitrary. DFE documentation (1994) lists the Governors' responsibilities for Inspection as: commenting on the plan for the Inspection; telling parents and others about the Inspection; arranging a meeting between the Registered Inspector and the parents; giving relevant information to the Registered Inspector who is doing the Inspection; distributing the Inspection report and a summary of it; drawing up an Action Plan setting out follow up action to the inspection; and, circulating the Action Plan to

parents and reporting to them about subsequent progress made in the Annual Report to parents. Compared to this list, which has not substantially changed even in the revised Framework of March 2002, none of the schools in the study side-stepped the governors. However it is true that in all the schools governors were not centrally involved in the writing of the Action Plan. It could be said that they were only marginally involved in the actual inspection beyond their specific interviews with inspectors. In School A this was unplanned in the first instance (see Chapter 5).

Action Planning seems to have been done by the school staff rather than the governors in all cases in this study. One head spoke for all when he said, "The Governors showed little if any understanding." It was also true that many of the governors were simply unable to give the time to this activity that the professional staff could or had to. An additional worry concerning the language that is used by Registered Inspectors in their reports may have added to the marginalisation. Whilst governors in this study did not overtly express their worries about their involvement in inspection and their ability to respond to the report because of any difficulty in understanding, they were mainly peripheral to inspections. Action plans were not 'owned' by governors.

The relationship between the head of school A, (1995), and the Chairman of Governors was different from those in the other schools. Reflecting on the events of the school's first inspection, the researcher, who was also the head in 1995, has seen that actions that she took to address the so-called professional agenda of inspection could have been seen as patronising and derogatory by the chairman. Documents and letters written at the time

show that both the head and the chair were seeking to improve the school but the language that each chose to use and the methodologies promoted for writing the Action Plan in particular, were incompatible and led to confrontation. As noted above, the head was trying to establish a working relationship with the registered inspector that did seem to have been compromised at the time by some actions of the chairman.

If OFSTED inspection is 'professional', where inspectors act as catalysts for change and improvement, relying upon a 'professional dialogue' in which the potential benefits of inspection are explored, it is likely that non-professionals such as governors who are all volunteers and mostly without an educational background, will feel marginalised.

To summarise, for inspection to have a lasting and positive effect on school improvement it is important that: the relationships surrounding inspection are good; the skill with which the oral and written feedbacks are given allows professional learning to take place; and, the governors position as lay people is acknowledged.

The communities' perception of the schools

During the period of the study schools B, C and D had been held in high esteem by their local communities for a lengthy period of time, as far as can be judged without a systematic survey having been carried out. This could not be said to be true of school A which had gone through a period of turbulence related to allegations of serious inappropriate behaviour of the previous headteacher five years before; the school was

known by a very derogatory name even in 1995. The 'good' reputation that was being established for the school was against this background.

At the time school C had a reputation for high standards of junior education, probably even greater than the reputation of the secondary schools. However, the measures of comparison for judging standards of attainment which are in common usage at the present time such as Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results, Advanced level results, value-added data, satisfaction surveys, and so on, were not publicly available at the time of the evidence collection phase of this study. Reputation was based, therefore, upon word-of-mouth and parental perceptions that could be erroneous in an educational sense. There was evidence from other OFSTED inspections that parents were often poor at making judgements about the quality of schooling that their children received (Ousten, Earley and Fidler, 1996).

However, one measure of the community perceptions that could be used with confidence was the numbers of students on roll at each school. All the schools had stable or growing rolls at the time of first inspections. School A had lost considerable numbers of children in 1990-91 after the incident referred to above but was again climbing in numbers. Due to the government policies of 'open' enrolment and devolved financial management based upon pupil numbers, it was crucial to School A that their reputation within the community continued to move forwards. School A was aware that an outcome from inspection has been that the balance of community perceptions has shifted and been overturned in some

cases: schools previously seen as successful have been seen as less so after inspection and so on. Understandably, if an inspector finds things for which action needs to be taken but which have been 'ducked' by the school, the community will be told through the inspection report. Governors as representatives of the community have the responsibility in law for setting strategies for putting things right to the benefit of pupils as opposed to the headteacher and the staff.

In the case study schools, the community perceptions were seen as sound for all schools at the time of first inspections although the reputation of school A could have been said to be fragile. Over the period of the study though, school B became fragile. [It went into 'Special Measures'; it was deemed to be failing, partially as a result of its second inspection and its failure to react to the outcomes of it and a subsequent inspection in 2002.]

In summary, it could be said that at the outset of the study all schools were perceived to be doing well by their communities but school A's standing was fragile. By the end of the period, school A was more confident and secure and school B was vulnerable.

The inconsistencies in the OFSTED process as experienced by the case study schools

Lack of credibility in the OFSTED process and questioning of the validity of the subsequent reports by teachers and senior staff in schools was problematic in school A (in 1995), school B (in 1998) and school C (in 1996). It is probably of significance that

these were the first inspections for all three schools and that the teaching staff and headteachers were, to some degree, not accepting what was happening. There is no evidence of a similar rejection in 1998 for schools A and B when they were re-inspected or for school D.

As noted above, one of the reasons for rejection of the inspection process and findings was the perception that OFSTED was not 'professional'. Teachers, and heads in the study, found fault with the inspections in: that they thought the inspectors were not sufficiently experienced or had credibility; that the process as applied appeared arbitrary; that the protocols were not always followed; that the judgements appeared to teachers to be ill-founded or unfair, a view not always shared by heads; that the evidence base for judgements was 'thin'; and, that insufficient status was given to their opinions as opposed to those of parents or children and that the work load that had been generated by the inspection requirements was disproportionate to the quality of the outcomes.

Inconsistencies that were noted during the course of this study were: the length of notification given to schools of impending inspection which extended from a whole year (school D) to 19 working days (school A, in 1995); constitution of the inspection team, their subject and management experience; the willingness to give oral feedback or not at a time when the process positively prohibited it (school A and school B, in 1995) and then poor quality feedback when it was allowed; and, the adherence to the Framework for example in the positioning of the meeting for parents and the relative importance attached to particular areas of inspection, particularly management issues and value for money.

The most significant possible inconsistency was the choice of school A for re-inspection by OFSTED in 1998, (Vann, 1999). As reported above, the headteacher had grounds to believe that a mistake had been made. Comparison of the two inspection reports for school A, (in 1995 and in 1998), and the report of the alternative school of the same name in another authority would support this belief.

Schools A and B (in 1995) and C reported similar recommendations for improvements in management within the schools; a hierarchical structure was advocated. This was surprising as the schools varied in size between approximately 300 children at the primary school and 1,700 at school B. It was predictable that very different management structures would have been beneficial and preferable. The head at the primary school said, "It was as if there was a template and we didn't quite fit." School A had opted for a 'flat' management style that continued through to second inspection in 1998. During both their inspections the management structure of school A was commented upon but in the 1998 inspection, the Registered Inspector accepted that the school's structure was working; leadership and management issues were commented upon very favourably in the 1998 report.

Headteachers in the study and elsewhere were surprised that the management model promoted by OFSTED appeared to them to be out-dated. They were also of the view that there was an intolerance of alternative approaches even where these could be seen to be effective.

It could be said that the headteachers were being overly sensitive to some of the inconsistencies but the inspection process was new, had been shown to be overly concerned about relatively minor issues (a register of attendance in the wrong place on one occasion at School A in 1995) but upon which great import was placed by OFSTED inspection teams. The headteachers felt that the inconsistencies and manipulation that they experienced (of dates, for example, in school A in 1995) to the advantage of OFSTED and disadvantage of the schools supported their view that the process was unnecessarily confrontational and punitive not developmental or for the purposes of school improvement. They believed that it was bureaucratic.

Interestingly, during the course of this study there was less evidence of the effect upon teaching and learning of the inspection process, except in the short term. That may not be seen as surprising given the newness of the process, but a large part of inspection time was being given to classroom observations. What was clear was that the judgemental approach used by OFSTED, where lessons were graded into categories from very good to poor, was applied inconsistently. In the short term, teachers were given guidance by headteachers about preparing themselves for the 'performance' of being observed and judged and disproportionate amounts of time were given over to lesson preparations for the inspection week.

It is known that teachers will 'teach to the test' if there is an accountability dimension. It was predictable that schools would alter their practice to follow the requirements of OFSTED also. For some this would be an improvement and to be welcomed but for others where good practice, but not the practice advocated by OFSTED, may have been prevalent there

were dangers that they would change only to find that a subsequent inspection would advance a different view. School A could have changed its management structures as a result of the 1995 inspection; it didn't and in 1998 the same structure was praised.

The acting head of school B (1998) spoke of his preparation for inspection consisting of predictions of what OFSTED would find wanting and having his answers ready for their critical comment. It could be said that this approach was successful in 1998; the school did not fail its inspection. It could also be said that it did not address issues that existed and when OFSTED returned in 2002, the school was failed on many of the 1998 elements that were seen by inspectors as being in decline then, but had remained. This failure was a disaster for all stakeholders in the school as it represented serious underachievement in almost all subject areas. Leadership and management in the school was said to be poor and ineffective in the report of 2002.

As noted, the headteachers felt that the system was punitive and adversarial and not contributing to formative professional or school development. They could understand how schools would change to match what they believed OFSTED wanted; they felt deskilled. Whilst this study has found evidence of this, it is also possible that the inspections of school B in 1995 and 1998 provided the school with an opportunity to improve to which it failed to respond.

In summary, the inconsistencies in the OFSTED process impacted greatly upon the schools; they perceived that the process was inequitable and therefore unfair even if the

inconsistencies could be demonstrated to have made no real impact upon the outcomes to the inspection.

The inconsistencies that were most notable were: of timing of the inspection; the arbitrary nature of judgements; the length of notification given to schools of impending inspection; the constitution of the inspection team, their subject and management experience; the willingness to give oral feedback or not; poor quality feedback and of written reports; and, the adherence to the Framework, for example in the positioning of the meeting for parents and the relative importance attached to particular areas of inspection, particularly management issues and value for money.

Further inconsistencies experienced within an individual school emanated from the inspection team itself: was the individual inspector qualified to inspect that subject area for example? Did the team have enough experience of a similar school to inspect it? Was a team member inspecting the management of a very much larger school than they had previously had experience of? Did one team, or team member, put more emphasis on one issue than another?

These issues remain unresolved as they require a greater level of evidence than can be found in this study.

Improvement through Inspection

The punitive atmosphere which surrounded inspection in the early years covered by this study was in direct contrast to the tone set by HMCI Tomlinson from 2000 onwards. He

acknowledged the significant role that teachers played in the improvement process. It is arguable that if there had been more encouragement and less threat attached to inspection in England compared to inspection in Scotland or New Zealand (see Chapter 3), improvement could have been swifter. Contrarily, it could be said that the threat of inspection was the only way that the atmosphere of accountability could be introduced into educational arenas.

Concern was raised by academics about OFSTED's claims that regular inspection of schools had been a powerful force for improving the quality of education and increasing standards achieved; this mirrored the concerns raised by some of the headteachers in the study. The academics suggested that other issues besides inspection could be responsible or contributory factors to school improvement. The headteachers of the case study schools showed their scepticism of the fairness and accuracy of judgements made. The judgements concerning value for money were in some ways even more tendentious. In school A, 1995, the oral feedback to the headteacher and deputy suggested that the school was nearly failed because of an advantageous allowance of non-contact time for teachers. This had had been deliberately established by the school to avoid excessive use of casual staff.

As noted above, schools did improve from 1993, the beginning of the OFSTED process, but there could have been many reasons for this. From the evidence collected during this study, it would seem that a school's approach to, and preparation for, OFSTED inspection itself was important to the ability of the school to learn from the outcomes of the

inspection report. This also applied to the school's ability to improve post inspection using the Action Planning process.

The case study schools which gave significant staff time to the Action Planning process do seem to have made sustained progress but on such a small sample this must remain a tentative finding.

The case study schools, even those where the headteacher was most sceptical about the inspection process, have also said that the most beneficial part of the inspection process for them was the preparation period. There appears to be a fine line between positive activity associated with preparation and over preparation, which, it has been suggested, has had a detrimental effect upon children's education because of the workload placed upon teachers. School A (1995) did not encourage teachers to do additional work partially because of the short notice of inspection but School D with its year long notice did report additional work. A contradiction here, though, was that the headteacher spoke of rejection of the results, if she had not liked them; it was a pilot!

Another aspect to the workload issue has been the anecdotal evidence of high teacher absence immediately after an inspection. Research on this is awaited.

Headteachers were relieved when 'light touch' inspections were introduced following the publication of Evaluation Matters (1998), a response to the anomaly of successful schools, seen to have the capability to improve further, still being subjected to full inspection. On a value for money basis this was seen as wasteful by educators and tax-

payers. However, the stress of inspection was not diminished and teachers still over-prepared.

Teacher morale, a feature in school B after both inspections, is also a concern which could diminish the school's ability to improve. The other case study schools seemed to have given significant thought to this issue. School A (1995) gave training and preparation to teachers through the pre-inspection inspection. In 1998 OFSTED was almost ignored by the headteacher in the eyes of the staff; he talked up the school's achievements and decided not to be blown off his chosen course of priorities. School C prepared for inspection but the headteacher worked hard to diminish the effects. School D felt well prepared for its pilot inspection but the staff still showed signs of stress and emotion, particularly during feedback sessions.

The role of a headteacher has always been perceived to include 'boundary keeping', that is not allowing the school to take on work that is either excessive or not in keeping with the schools other activities. It has been suggested that in the interests of teacher morale, schools could choose not to take on national initiatives but, of course, these initiatives, such as the national numeracy and literacy strategies, are subject to inspection and potential public criticism through inspection reports. This is a tension to which few headteachers would be willing to subject their school, even if teacher morale remained high in the meantime.

The headteachers in the study thought that the feedback sessions had the potential to be developmental and significant in terms of school improvement. However feedbacks were

of variable quality. The 1995 inspections in this study were not allowed to have discussions with teachers. Later inspections featured dialogue which could help teachers to improve.

In summary, school improvement as a result of inspection alone is not proven. Significant improvement in schools can be made using inspection as a tool to aid the work of all those who work in schools: teachers, governors and headteachers. The atmosphere surrounding an inspection is important to eventual success. There should be a concentration upon issues of teaching and learning. In this respect, constructive, well structured and unrushed feedback to teachers is critical. Staff should be thoroughly prepared for inspection so that they have confidence in the inspectors' judgements and can see how they can improve their practice.

Headteachers need to give thought to issues of staff workload which have been shown to impact upon morale and staff absence immediately post inspection. Inclusive and purposeful action planning is important to eventual school improvement.

Action Planning

For the purposes of this study, one aspect of the work associated with inspection, Action Planning, has been analysed using data from the four case study schools. Schools A, C and D showed improvement after inspection, this could have been dependent upon the school's ability to learn from the inspection and its ability to action plan appropriately.

The case study schools knew that in the action plan governors should: address the key issues identified in the inspection report; determine some action to address each key issue; and, identify a person responsible and establish monitoring through measures of progress and success criteria. However, OFSTED research had shown (1995) that the quality of action planning was variable.

All of the study schools thought they were prepared adequately to create an action plan. However there were major problems with this process in school A, 1995, and school B did not give any time to involving staff, other on a token basis, on either inspection occasion.

All the action plans dealt with the Key Issues identified for action in the inspection report and responsibility and timeframes were ascribed to each feature. In the case of school B, however, no 'ownership' appears to have been accepted by the staff, especially of those issues related to teaching and learning. School A, 1995, did recognise the 'glass ceiling' on achievement noted by inspectors and addressed it through work on teaching and learning.

Common weaknesses in action plans at the time, as reported by OFSTED, were that the majority of schools were not costing their plans fully; nearly all omitted evaluation of pupils' achievements and needed help with establishing and using indicators to measure success. These weaknesses were present in the case study schools also, although all schools had tried to cost their plans.

Failure to write acceptable plans by OFSTED's standards in these respects was mainly due to lack of skill from 1993-1995. School A had written to OFSTED when submitting their action plan, requesting guidance. No reply was received. [During the course of this study, the writer discovered that action plans were not ever read by OFSTED, they were sub-contracted out and added to the data-base that OFSTED were building, to be referred to only when further action was being contemplated.]

OFSTED advised governing bodies in 1995 that before an inspection they should organise the work in advance, using any available support and training. Further they should understand the OFSTED Framework and plan their own contacts with inspectors. This was largely done by the case study schools but at the behest of the headteachers not the governors. It could be argued that governors were not given the opportunity to take on this responsibility appropriately. Contrarily it could be said that headteachers believed that governors were not able to take this on given that they are volunteers and most had little appropriate knowledge at that time.

Good action plans, OFSTED suggested, addressed the key issues of the inspection report. All the case study schools did this but they were less clear about including overall objectives and priorities for the school or linking them to development plans. None of the schools' action plans described precise targets but all included monitoring activities.

At the stage in their development that the case study schools were at, their action plans were not linked well to staff development or capacity building activities. There was a

determination from the headteachers of all the schools to make the most of the inspection reports but how they were to do that was less clear.

The governors of school A had prepared for inspection; they had had training from the LEA and had made plans for the actual inspection (Chapter 5). However, the plans went awry and the headteacher and deputy decided to manage the process differently from their original intention. As a result, it could be said, the action plan was not 'owned' by the chairman of governors and may have been only partially 'owned' by other governors. It could be argued that the staff fully 'owned' it as they wrote it in a one-day workshop.

With hindsight and the benefit of the advice from HMI unavailable at the time of writing the action plan (1995), the headteacher could see that the exclusion of the governors from the process of action planning could have been detrimental to the school's development and could have alienated the governors from their legal duties to the school. She does not, however, believe this to have been so. The relationship with governors of herself and her deputy continued to be good; her deputy became the head of the school in 1997. Additionally, the 1998 inspection report congratulated the school on the way that it had used the key issues and main findings of the 1995 report to aid school improvement.

It is interesting to note however that the headteacher did express concerns about the action plan and was surprised that there was no official acceptance of the action plan by OFSTED. Official acceptance was not, and is not, part of the process, which seems odd given that so much importance is placed upon it.

School C and school D seemed to have involved governors with more success in the action planning stage but there was still comment that implied that the governors were not fully involved. The headteachers did speak unenthusiastically about governors' involvement and their ability to write an action plan. The range of activity suggested by HMI (1995) for governors in order that they could produce a good and effective action plan does seem to suggest a 'professional' activity rather than that of even a well informed lay person.

School B was the school where action planning and its outcomes seemed to have gone awry in an alarming way. It was reported in Chapter 6 that the school action plan following inspection in 1995 was written by the senior management team and accepted by the governors who were very involved in its implementation. It did take notice of the Key Issues from the inspection report and proposed major changes in the management structure in particular. This action plan was not 'owned' by the staff and major difficulties ensued which affected the inspection of 1998 according to the acting headteacher at the time.

The second inspection at school B (Chapter 6) was controlled by the acting headteacher who also wrote the action plan in isolation, gave it to the staff for comment and presented it to the governors. It could be argued that the lack of 'ownership' and the failure to act upon the main findings that were in the inspection report in 1998 led directly to the failure of the school in its inspection in 2002. By 2002 there had still not been any change to the management and leadership issues highlighted in the two previous reports; leadership and management were said in the 2002 report to be poor and ineffective. By this time,

standards of achievement in the school had sunk to low levels; numbers on roll and attendance levels had dropped.

It cannot be argued, however, that the failure to write an action plan was the reason for failures at school B. It cannot be argued that the success of school A post 1995 was as a result of a successful action plan, written as it was without the support of the chair of governors. It is probable that the improvement of school A was the result of many other factors such as the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning or the appointment of staff that could have had an even greater effect on the school's improvement.

However, it is true that inspection by OFSTED did focus the minds of all stakeholders of school A in a positive way that appeared to be absent in school B. It helped the head of school A to confront the few intransigent members of staff, and gave validity to the changes to process and methodology within the school which were being enacted in 1995 and in 1998. It would be true to say that OFSTED inspection gave the headteachers at all the case study schools the opportunity to change attitudes and drive school improvement forwards.

It is interesting to note that OFSTED eventually issued fresh advice to schools on action planning entitled *Action Planning for School Improvement* (OFSTED, 2001). In this document there is only a passing reference to the fact that it is a *governors* action plan, (para 11 bullet point 4). Governors are still included in the plan, principally in a monitoring role. Unlike the period when action plans were being written by the case study schools, there is no suggestion that governors should be writing them.

A second point worthy of note is that the document has little to say about schools that have been shown through inspection to be successful. It could be thought that little needs be said but all schools have to have an action plan post inspection; they all have to show how they are going to improve. It would have been appropriate to have included advice and exemplar material for them too. In some ways it can be said to be even more challenging for leaders to manage a successful school and keep it moving forwards than it is to affect a weak school, if capacity to do so exists.

In summary, action planning post inspection which includes the whole school community undertaking roles for which they are competent is a critical activity if schools are to build upon inspection outcomes to improve. It is important that they take the school community, including governors, with them.

Action planning should be an open and inclusive activity using triangulation from outside the school wherever possible but the evidence from this study is that governors are not the appropriate people to lead the action planning.

Action planning should be linked to school development plans, time-related and showing clear responsibilities. It should focus upon outcomes that affect student learning. Regular monitoring of progress towards the targets resulting from Key Issues from inspection is necessary.

It remains unproven that the creation of an action plan of itself will lead to school improvement. Rather, it is likely that the activity, which could happen without an OFSTED

inspection to prompt it, is the catalyst for school improvement. For this reason, the case study schools, typically, were variably successful in moving forwards.

Summary and conclusions

Summary

This chapter of analysis can be summarised as follows:

- the predisposition of the headteachers relates to: the context of the school; the attitude of the headteacher to the process, including their own beliefs about the value of inspection and the inspection process: and, the headteachers' understanding of the improvement required in their schools.
- the behaviour of the headteachers demonstrated that they were not antipathetic to the concept of accountability or to inspection, at least publicly. An outside perspective was encouraged to aid school improvement. Some believed the OFSTED process lacked professionalism, rigour and purpose in terms of the strands of enquiry followed. Headteachers showed a range of emotions and often reacted personally.
- the timing of the inspections showed inequality. Tone and atmosphere surrounding the inspection varied.
- the air of suspicion lingered after the Framework changed. OFSTED teams and management were: sometimes disorganised; had poor credentials for doing the

inspectorial role, including a lack of subject knowledge; used documentation provided by the schools poorly; and, showed poor understanding of the individuality of schools.

- the OFSTED process failed to recognise the differing points reached by the schools in terms of their progress or the journeys undertaken and OFSTED reports showed a lack of sensitivity, including to schools that should have been challenged more.
- it appeared there was an OFSTED 'template', or preferred model, of management with OFSTED appearing unwilling to accept alternative strategies.
- inspection should have good relationships between the inspectors and the inspected; it should be skilful and acknowledge the competence of all involved if it is to have a lasting and positive effect on school improvement.
- the community perceptions are important but can shift and they do not always cohere with educational measures of success.
- the inconsistencies in the OFSTED process impacted greatly upon the schools; they perceived that the process was inequitable and therefore unfair. Examples were: of timing of the inspection; the arbitrary nature of judgements; the length of notification given to schools of impending inspection; the constitution of the inspection team, their

subject and management experience; the willingness to give oral feedback or not; poor quality feedback and of written reports; and, the adherence to the Framework and the relative importance attached to management issues and value for money. Other inconsistencies were individual.

- headteachers need to give more thought to the impact of inspection, particularly on staff, its use for school improvement and how headteachers manage and show active leadership through the process.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the evidence collected from the four case study schools from September 1995 to January 2000 by examining: the personal dispositions of the headteachers towards inspection; the behaviour of the headteachers; the timing of inspection; the situation of the schools; the relationship of the schools with stakeholders; the communities' perspectives of the schools; inconsistencies in the inspection process; whether improvement through inspection could be shown; and, the importance of action planning following inspection.

The chapter noted differences between the schools, their experience of inspection and possible consequences. It reflected critically upon the data from Chapters 5 and 6, paying particular attention to the inconsistencies in the OFSTED process as experienced by the study schools and the schools' abilities to use their experience for the purposes of school improvement.

From the evidence presented here, school improvement as a result of inspection alone is not proven. Significant improvement in schools can be made using inspection as a tool to aid the work of all those who work in schools: teachers, governors and headteachers. The atmosphere surrounding an inspection is important to its eventual success in setting the tone for future work. There should be a concentration upon issues of teaching and learning. In this respect, constructive, well structured and unrushed feedback to teachers is critical. Staff should be thoroughly prepared for inspection so that they have confidence in the inspectors' judgements and can see how they can improve their practice as a result of what has been said.

Headteachers need to give thought to issues of staff workload which have been shown to impact upon morale and staff absence immediately post inspection. Inclusive and purposeful action planning is important to eventual school improvement.

It still remains unproven that the creation of an action plan of itself will lead to school improvement. Rather it is likely that it is the activity, which could happen without an OFSTED inspection to prompt it, that is the catalyst for school improvement. This is one reason why the case study schools were variably successful in moving forwards.

Chapter 8 will present the summary, conclusions, implications and recommendations for further research prompted by this study.

Chapter 8: Summary of findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further study

Introduction

The purpose of the study was: to improve the author's services to her school where she was headteacher; to improve her headship skills; to reflect upon the next steps towards school improvement in her own institution; and, to investigate whether OFSTED inspection did act as an accountability mechanism in the government's terms, coincidentally capable of driving school improvement nationally in schools.

Advice was plentiful at the time from professional associations and educational consultants to help headteachers reach a successful conclusion in the inspection of their schools, but little was known about the process from the perspective of a headteacher. During the course of this study there were no examples found, and none found since, of research undertaken by a headteacher about the process of inspection as it affected their own school or its affects upon school improvement in the school in the longer term.

The significance of this study is that, perhaps uniquely, it has been undertaken by a practitioner fully immersed in the work of headship who was able to triangulate her experience with expectations and advice offered by central government, professionals outside her institution and some of the literature in the field. Additionally, she was in a privileged position to question other headteachers from a position of equality.

This study was longitudinal; evidence was collected over a period of five years. Two of the case study schools were inspected twice in that period which gave an opportunity for comparison of the way that the different OFSTED teams worked but also for comparison of the inspection outcomes in the two schools concerned.

The research questions used in this study were:

- How effective is the OFSTED process as an accountability mechanism?
- Does whole school inspection lead to school improvement?

A summary of the methods employed to investigate these two questions and the findings follow. The summary of the findings is organised around the topics: the effectiveness of OFSTED as an accountability system; the period of notice of inspection; preparation for inspection; the pre-inspection processes; relationship of the Registered Inspector with staff and governors; inspection; reports; and action planning.

Following these summaries, conclusions from the study are drawn, implications for policy and practice outlined and recommendations for further study made.

Summary: Method

The methods used in this qualitative ethnographic (Janesick, 1994) study were reflective, following the advice of Macpherson (1987). It has given an 'interpretation of reality' (Young,

1997) as understood by the headteachers of the case study schools, reported, analysed and elucidated by the author.

The qualitative ethnographic methodology employed (Burns, 1995; Vidich and Lyman, 1994; Merriam, 1988; Marshall and Rossman, 1995) was subjectivist. It developed case studies (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993; Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994). Data was collected through interviews (Merriam, 1988 and Marshall and Rossman, 1995), participant observation (Merriam, 1988; Adler and Adler, 1994 and Burns, 1995) and analysis of documents such as computer logs, transcripts, and minutes of meetings and published material compiled at the time.

Ethical considerations and dilemmas received considerable attention following advice from Punch (1994) and Bibby (1997). The potential for personal and political problems as a source of bias was recognised (Merriam, 1998). The likelihood of data being altered during collection as a result of the personal dynamics between the researcher and the case study headteachers was predicted, monitored carefully and reviewed for effect, by analysis of the data (Merriam, 1988; Macpherson and Weeks, 1990; Burns, 1994). It was recognised that the researcher and participants would bring their personal dynamics to the study (Crowther and Gibson, 1990; Young, 1997). Further, it was expected that the study would be affected by the values of the researcher and the participants (Merriam, 1988).

Data collection and treatment followed the guidance of Merriam (1988) and Burns (1995). It was an interactive process during which the researcher was concerned with producing believable and trustworthy findings. Validity and reliability were major concerns. The researcher was alert to the difficulties inherent in research of this nature (Merriam, 1988; Burns, 1995; Marshall and Rossman, 1995) but was persuaded by the argument (Merriam, 1988) that the over-riding consideration was for the participants' perspectives rather than 'complete truth'.

The author acknowledges that there are limitations upon the methodology employed in this research; the interpretation of the data is open to question. However as Merriam (1995) has argued subjective interpretation of the data is to be expected in qualitative research where subjects and situations are multi-dimensional and dynamic; they are not waiting to be discovered, observed and recorded. Replication of the study remains problematic, in terms of the outcomes (Marshall and Rossman, 1995) but the methodology could be employed in similar circumstances.

Transferability of the outcomes cannot be claimed given the uniqueness of the research and the circumstances. However, through triangulation, the methodology was found to be robust.

Summary: Findings

Effectiveness as an accountability mechanism

OFSTED could be said to be an effective inspection regime; all the schools in England were inspected and reports published. However, as this study has demonstrated, it could have been more effective as an organisation and in its use of the process. Its effectiveness in relation to the schools and their improvement after inspection was questionable in the early years given that there was so little interaction between the inspection team and the schools.

The OFSTED process has been seen as managerial (Macpherson, 1996). The process implied that, correctly followed, schools would be successful as institutions, as successful places for teaching and learning, and would 'pass' inspection successfully. The OFSTED process was meant to be a principal method of ensuring that schools were fully accountable to the government and 'stakeholders' such as parents and the wider community.

This research found that the OFSTED process can be affirming for schools and headteachers. It can be a valuable source of information to aid triangulation and evaluation of the school's progress. OFSTED is an effective accountability mechanism in that it allows the government and school community to access information about the school being

inspected and monitor the work of the school against an agreed national Framework. In the eyes of headteachers, it can be a useful way of focussing the attention of staff upon changes and developments that may have appeared difficult to take forward; OFSTED may give them the necessary imperative or leverage to make desired changes.

Two groups of findings emerged in this research in considering the effectiveness of the OFSTED process as an accountability mechanism (Kogan 19865, p.25). One group showed that the process of inspection by OFSTED could be said to be effective, the framework for judgements was clearly laid out for schools and for inspectors, although in the early years of inspections only inspectors had the information that guided judgements, and all schools were inspected and reports published. School improvement took place in three of the four case study schools over the period of this study. If numbers on roll were selected as success measures, it could be argued that all were successful in that all four schools numbers rose by 2000.

The case study schools were able to move forwards and improve their educational services to children, parents and the community as a result of their inspection experience. However, the schools would also argue that some of the main findings or key issues identified by OFSTED were already being addressed; this can be seen to be true in some respects.

In terms of the effectiveness of OFSTED, this research showed that the way that the OFSTED process and its associated elements were carried out reduced its effectiveness

for the schools and therefore the potential for it to be a creditable accountability mechanism for the school communities and one which would be problematic if there were to be an apolitical review by the government. This group of findings is now summarised.

Period of notice of inspection

It has been argued (Wilcox and Gray, 1996; Kogan and Maden, 1999) that the notice given of impending inspection within the Framework at the time of this study was too long. Notification of the date of inspection to the case study schools varied from 19 working days to one calendar year. The result of the variation was, on the one hand, an emphasis on the preparation of paperwork and a paralysis in the school's own priorities for improvement and, on the other, an emergence of a cynical attitude amongst teachers. Even in the schools where teachers were supported by the LEA as well as the headteacher, teachers were anxious, found the process stressful and had higher than usual levels of absence immediately after the inspection week. These findings are consistent with previous research (e.g., Ouston, Earley and Fidler, 1996; Wilcox and Gray, 1996).

Whilst no negotiation is allowed in the choice of date for inspection (only a major school disaster such as a fire or the unexpected death of the headteacher is accepted as good reason for deferral), one school did have a choice between two dates which caused a feeling of frustration in the other school which was one of the case study schools.

There is evidence from this study, but rejected by OFSTED, that a mistake was made by OFSTED in the reason for choosing school A for its second inspection at an earlier point than could have been expected in the cycle of inspections.

Preparation for inspection: Documentation, staff and governors

The schools in the study were prepared using a mixture of in-house and LEA support; their documentation was copious, in accordance with the Framework, and could be said to have been effective and fully accountable. This was time consuming as much was required in a form that did not exist in the schools. Parents also perceived that too much teacher time was devoted to the preparation for OFSTED.

A school which had its documentation well prepared was supposed, by OFSTED, to be able to respond with confidence to notification of an impending inspection. Headteachers were expected to prepare their staff, ensuring that they knew the process. The case study schools had all given staff development time and meeting time to preparation of staff and governors but had not always involved outside bodies such as the LEA.

The preparation of staff was noted positively in all the schools but the considerable periods of time involved in waiting for the actual inspection to begin were noted as derogatory upon the normal working of the schools, (see also: Ouston, Earley and Fidler, 1996; Wilcox and Gray, 1996; Kogan and Maden, 1999a; Curtis, 2002) particularly that inspection which took place at the beginning of the school year.

The variable involvement of the LEA in preparation was noted. Schools B (second inspection) and C felt that the LEA was not helpful, that they were, in effect, a hindrance because the LEA did not respond to requests for help sufficiently early. However, there was more evidence of help after inspection in school B. It is possible that the LEAs had not fully recognised the need for specific support at this time or that they were unable to respond due to a lack of appropriate skills. It is also possible that the schools did not ask early enough.

The preparation for the second inspection in school A was carried out largely by the headteacher and the LEA with little activity from the staff due to the headteacher's lack of belief in the validity of the inspection and his decision to keep the inspection low-key.

The involvement of the governors in the case study schools prior to inspection was variable. All the schools gave their governors briefings and training on the process and the interviews individual governors would have with the inspection teams, (see also: Ouston, Earley and Fidler, 1996; Wilcox and Gray, 1996; Kogan and Maden, 1999a). However, the headteachers had differing expectations of their Chairs of Governors in particular. The headteacher of School A had expected, and received, a caring and thoughtful supportive role from the Chair during its first inspection. In its second inspection governors were reported as being more remote. School B kept the governors remote from the process during both inspections. School C involved governors fully in the preparation but had little

expectation of involvement during the inspection. School D had a minimal involvement from Governors although the Chair was supportive to the head on a personal level.

Contact from the registered inspector and pre-inspection processes

In all the schools initial contact from OFSTED with the headteacher was through a phone call. All the headteachers reported this as satisfactory. Schools A, B and C all experienced difficulties from that point on. School A experienced this difficulty during both inspection processes but also for the HMI visit which occurred between them. School D expressed the view that no difficulties were encountered but, it could have been that as a 'pilot' this inspection was quite different in character and more carefully organised by OFSTED and the LEA.

The types of difficulties encountered by the case study schools were: lateness of information and requests for information; corrupted files; 'shambolic' organisation; wrong information; and, incorrect and illegal interpretation of the OFSTED process. These difficulties increased the pressure felt by the headteacher in particular and, more widely, decreased the feeling that the inspection process was a professional activity. Post-inspection this was one reason why the final report was not wholeheartedly believed and certainly not seen as contributing to the school's improvement efforts.

Relationship of the Registered Inspector with staff and governors

In school A during the first inspection and in school C the relationships between the Registered Inspector (Rgl) and the staff and governors caused disquiet and some tensions. There was evidence that in school A and C that the Rgl failed to understand the tensions that surrounded the inspections. This lack of understanding increased the feelings of stress and anxiety amongst some staff. The personal animosity of the Chair of governors in school A, first inspection, to the Rgl was unexpected and not found elsewhere.

More usually, the Registered Inspector tried hard to establish a good working relationship with the senior management and governors of the schools. However, in the case study schools credibility in the inspection team was suspect in two schools from the head and/or senior members of staff due to the perceived lack of experience and qualification of the inspection team. Governors also felt anxious but it was difficult to discern whether this was primarily because of their own insecurity at dealing with what they thought to be professional issues outside their experience.

Personal relationships between the inspection teams and school based personnel were tentative and rarely were any positive views expressed, except after the process was complete and the report published. This situation led to a presumption from teachers that comments made by inspectors were negative or critical, even where no negativity or criticism was intended by inspectors.

Inspection

The evidence from this thesis supports the general premise that the OFSTED inspection process is effective in terms of accountability of the schools to the government and to the public purse for the actions of schools and their spending decisions related to student outcomes. All the case study schools were judged to have given value for money, including two on two separate inspections. Further, they were all judged to have 'passed' their inspections on each occasion, as indicated in their published inspection reports.

However, there were issues raised about the process that could be seen to call the inspections into question and therefore the effectiveness of them as an accountability mechanism. The first inspection of school A almost foundered on the issue of value for money due to enhanced teacher levels of non-contact. The second inspection of school A was questionable. HMI and OFSTED said that it had 'failed' its first inspection due to the poor behaviour of the children although this had never been raised during any part of that inspection. No mistake of identification of the school was ever admitted by OFSTED, despite evidence to the contrary (Vann, 2000). Similarly, the interpretation of the process by the inspection teams in school A and school B (first inspections) was muddled and lacked clarity; they did not follow the process as laid out in the Framework at that time. OFSTED's effectiveness as an organisation, therefore, is seen to be problematic.

Inconsistency in the process was a recurring finding. This inconsistency was derogatory to the schools. The lack of effectiveness of the inspection process was seen in: the variation

in the number and percentage of lessons observed; the quality of judgements made about lessons observed; the failure to observe whole lessons; the disproportionate impact of small lapses in school processes (an attendance register not handed in on time); the management of the meeting with parents by the Registered Inspector; the lack of time given to headteachers to check reports before publication; the quality of feedback to governors; and, the encouragement that was given by inspectors for schools to view the process as developmental and therefore share areas of weakness, subsequently criticised in the final report.

Oral feedback was seen to be of inconsistent quality and worth. Much of the feedback to teachers after lesson observations was rushed and unplanned so that little was learnt by the teacher and they often felt de-motivated as a result. Oral feedback to heads of department and headteachers was, on occasions, very enthusiastic but the value of this for school improvement was lost when it was standardised or diluted in the written report. Also governors were disadvantaged by not hearing the enthusiasm of the oral feedback.

The atmosphere surrounding the inspections varied from relaxed to highly stressful. The early inspections took no notice of the 'journey travelled' by the school to reach the point at which the inspections took place.

Reports

A worrying aspect of the inspection process as an accountability mechanism was the demonstrable similarity of the final reports of the case study schools, even when, for example, they varied hugely in size and age of students for example. Wording was similar and, in part, the same. School A and School B had the same Registered Inspector for their first inspections and the criticisms and recommendations of management to be found in their final reports were alike, espousing a hierarchical model. This suggested to the headteachers that OFSTED had a 'template' for management even though the size and organisation of the schools was very different pre-inspection. The Key Issues identified in each report, particularly school A and school B, first inspections, also showed similarities.

The headteachers resented the onus placed upon them, as they saw it, to ensure the accuracy of the data produced by OFSTED and of the final reports. It was found that advice given to headteachers orally paid little attention to legislation, such as employment law, so was negative; the headteachers largely knew that key staff changes that they would have wanted to make would have improved their schools but the law did not allow it.

In some cases the Key Issues identified were beyond the school's capability to address. The size of the gymnasium or the lack of a school hall are examples. In other reports the Key Issues were seen as being trivial or at odds with the school's direction. The second inspections did not pursue these issues, necessarily, which upheld the headteachers' decisions to ignore them, but weakened the credibility of the OFSTED process.

Alternatively, school B, when inspected for the second time did not show progress from the first inspection it took a further inspection some four years later to call it to account. This finding suggests that it is also possible for schools to 'hide' poor performance.

A further perceived difficulty for the headteachers to manage was that both the distillations of reports sent to parents and the community, as well as the full reports, did allow identification of individual staff. Clearly such identification, when critical, led to a worsening situation as they were open to the scrutiny of the press. Members of staff in the case study schools expected to be pilloried, as had happened in other areas of the country. This did not happen but the effect of identification in this way on accountability was disproportionate in a small school, like school C.

The press response to the OFSTED reports was managed to a great degree by the headteacher and the chair of governors. A press statement from the school is a prerequisite but journalists have used the reports to support their pre-existing views about a school. School A was especially conscious of this danger but all the schools gave this attention.

Reports do not reflect the capacity of a school to move forwards; they are not developmental. It could be argued that there is a contradiction in terms of good staff development practice (see, for example: Harris, 2001; Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001; Sammons et al, 1995; Stoll and Fink, 1996).

In terms of accountability however, publication of the OFSTED report is similar to the US experience in Kentucky. A poor OFSTED inspection report, especially in the leadership and management section, can lead to the removal of the headteacher. The reports generated by inspection teams in New Zealand and in Scotland are more supportive in tone, even though the threat of a poor report may still exist.

Action planning

The Action Planning phase was found to be an ineffective part of the OFSTED process as an accountability mechanism and as a tool for school improvement between 1995 and 2001. Schools had little notion of how to do Action Plans in the early years. There was little focus on Action Plans in the OFSTED Framework so schools wrote them in a vacuum. In addition, as volunteers working mainly in the evenings, governors were not able to do them. They had little professional knowledge, capacity or time; they could not interpret what was needed for a professional audience in terms of school improvement.

Staff absence immediately after the inspection was a serious issue for all the case study schools. Even when they had 'done well', staff were very often negative and scathing about the inspection process. This staff reaction diminished the effectiveness of the action planning stage and the opportunity for school improvement as a result of the OFSTED report.

Conclusions

The findings from this study indicate that the OFSTED inspection process is an effective accountability process for the government: all schools have been inspected and reports produced. Due to the vagaries and inconsistencies encountered, this is not seen as true for local communities or for the schools themselves. However OFSTED inspection has not been found to be an effective accountability measure in terms of teaching and learning or the wider educational school-based processes.

The inconsistencies and difficulties found to be inherent in the inspection process also diminish the possibility of it leading to significant school improvement, which was the stated aim of OFSTED.

It has not been possible to make a judgement of how much school improvement has resulted from the onset of inspection in 1993. It is likely that other elements of education legislation such as League Tables of results, self-management, improved levels of funding for schools, and open enrolment, coupled with the application of research into school effectiveness and school improvement, have contributed. However, the general perception in England is that inspection has led to school improvement through the establishment of a culture of public and open accountability and review to de-mystified most school processes that previously clouded accountability. The results of this study suggest, as concluded earlier, that this general perception needs to be qualified. Given the large amount of resources required, including the emotional stress on all stakeholders, and the need to find

a acceptable balances between costs and benefits, societal and professional accountability, and the bureaucratic system (audit) and school and its community (developmental) needs, the effectiveness of the OFSTED inspection process clearly has to be more rigorously established.

Implications

The implications of this research for policy and practice follow.

- A culture of inspection in schools and all educational settings has been accepted over time, which can either positively or negatively affect a school's ability to review practice and therefore improve. Positive results are more likely when accountability is not simply something 'done to others' with an audit/financial emphasis, formulaic process and punitive outcomes, but 'done with others' with a developmental emphasis, flexible process and constant important underlying concept in this distinction with ownership more likely to occur in schools and their communities in the later approach.
- Value for money should be dropped as the final arbiter of a successful school and thus of a successful inspection.
- Management 'templates' from OFSTED should be avoided; judgement should reflect the question, 'does it work for this school?'
- OFSTED should be able to admit mistakes and accept that inspection is not a safe, scientific process.

- The many inconsistencies in the inspection process are prejudicial to schools and diminish considerably the likelihood of acceptance of the results by schools and their communities. Inspectors should receive more training focussed particularly upon interpretation of data and interpersonal skills. They should be willing to engage in a professional dialogue with the school.
- Improving the quality of the OFSTED process and the professionalism of the inspection teams would raise the credibility of the report and the possibility of resultant school improvement. Subject specialism and knowledge would assist here.
- A reduction and simplification in the OFSTED documentation would assist in making inspections beneficial.
- As argued above, a developmental rather than judgemental or punitive atmosphere to inspection should be established to aid school improvement. A change in language from 'weakness' or 'failing' to 'areas for development', for example, would highlight the different approach.
- The language used in reports should not obfuscate the outcomes, identify individuals or diminish the school's achievements.
- The cost of running the OFSTED process should be balanced against the need for accountability and the raising of school standards; the inclusion of a method of self-evaluation as in Scotland would be more cost-effective and create a more developmental atmosphere as schools would have greater ownership of subsequent actions.

- The Framework for Inspection has been largely seen as helpful and successful but should develop further to reflect greater understanding of continual school improvement processes.
- The involvement of community representatives in the inspection team would be beneficial as it would give credibility to the process, as in New South Wales.
- Recommendations for staff development should be part of the final report, which involve the LEA to a greater degree so that building the capacity to improve becomes a factor in school improvement.
- The inspection process needs to focus upon more than just teachers to lead school improvement; school improvement and school effectiveness research have identified multiple factors that should be harnessed.
- Consistent and robust classroom observations, focussing upon learning rather than teaching, would aid school improvement.
- Immediate feedback to teachers should be seen as a fundamental school improvement strategy.
- Greater emphasis should be given to the final report and therefore more thought and care should be given to its construction, distribution and use, including its clear link to the school's Action Plan.
- School development plans should be linked more clearly to inspection processes and outcomes to avoid duplication or the ignoring of opportunities

for improvement following inspection. The key here is the quality of the inspection processes and evidence.

- If all schools are to be inspected on the same basis, the benefits and opportunities for improvement for already successful schools should be more clearly defined.
- Teachers should be more involved in the process, including as part of the inspection team. A workshop/professional development approach to build capacity could be used with staff and governors reflecting the inspection outcomes.
- Expectations of the role of governors should be realistic, given their experience as voluntary, lay members of the school stakeholder group. They should be helped to be involved but as partners in a professional dialogue involving the school development plan where this has already agreed foci for the school's development.
- Using a collaborative, instead of competitive, philosophy, leadership skills should be developed across the school and between schools. This should lead to increased potential for improvement, increased capacity building in individual institutions but should also develop into area inspections and joint responsibility for raising achievement in neighbouring schools.

Recommendations for further study

- The research should be repeated to establish whether schools continue to improve as the inspection process develops, not only in England but also compared to changed inspection processes in New Zealand, Scotland, Australia, and the USA.
- The effect of distributed leadership in effective accountability, including inspection, compared to the hierarchical, 'hero' model most often supported by OFSTED in school improvement.
- The perception of the accountability of the school to stakeholder groups when a more self-evaluative or neighbourhood model of inspection is used.
- The cost of OFSTED inspections compared to improvements in outcomes for students and other forms of school review.
- The blocks to school accountability and improvement including: the movement of key personnel; institutional micro-politics; developing and retaining enthusiasm, commitment and ownership; being able to show causality from action to improvement where there may be many strategies working together; retaining a clarity of view about process and outcomes; developing strategies to embed initiatives as they progress; avoidance of 'paralysis' associated with external pressures, such as OFSTED; and, addressing issues that are site-specific.
- The nature of quality evidence and how it is best gathered, and its use in accountability (including inspection) and school improvement.

REFERENCES

Accountability and Improvement in New South Wales Public Schools

www.det.nsw.edu.au/stand.cgi/community/C1.0/C1.4/index.htm (Accessed on 8.8.02)

Adler, Patricia and Adler, Peter (1994) *Observational Techniques*. In Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds) (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Agambar, Christine (1999) Address to the Cornish Association of Secondary Headteachers. 22nd January.

Aitken, J. (1999) A Decade of Educational Reform: Are we equipped for the new millennium? Address to the New Zealand Chapter of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce. Wellington, May.

Apple, Michael (1996) *Cultural Politics and the Market Place*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Atkinson, Paul and Hammersley Martyn (1994) *Ethnography and Participant Observation*. In Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds) (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Ball, S. J. (1990) *Politics and Policy Making in Education*. London: Routledge.

Ball, S.J. (1994) *Education Reform: a critical and post-structural approach*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Barber, M. (1995) *The Dark Side of the Moon: Imagining an End to Failure in Urban Education*. The TES/Greenwich Education Lecture delivered at Woolwich Town Hall, London. 11 May.

Barber, M. and Fuller, P. (1995) *Inspection Quality 1994/95*. London: Office for Standards in Education.

Barber, M. (1996a) *The Learning Game: Arguments for an Education Revolution*. London: Victor Gollancz.

Barber, M. and Dann, R. (Eds.) (1996b) *Raising Educational Standards in the Inner Cities*. London: Cassell.

Barber, Michael (1996c) *The Curriculum, the Minister, his Boss and her Hairdresser: the Rise and Fall of Kenneth Baker's Plan*. London: Institute of Education, occasional pamphlet.

Barber, M. (2000) Framework for Continuous Improvement. Speech given in Washington D.C. May 31st.

Barnhardt, R. Chilcott, J. H. and Wolcott, Harry F. (1979) *Anthropology and Educational Administration*. Tucson: Impresora Sahuaro.

Bassey, M. (2001) BERA Comments on the Annual Report of HMCI of Schools for 1999-2000 to the Parliamentary Select Committee. *British Educational Research Newsletter (Research Intelligence)*. No 75. April. (12-15).

Beare, H.Caldwell, B. and Millikan, R. (1989) *Creating an Excellent School*. London: Routledge..

Beare, H. and Boyd, W.L. (Eds.)(1993) *Restructuring Schools: an International Perspective on the Movement to Transform the Control and Performance of Schools*. London: The Falmer Press.

Beckhard, R. and Pritchard, W. (1992) *Changing the Essence: the Art of Creating and Leading Fundamental Change in Organisations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bell, J. (1987) *Doing Your Research Project*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press

Benn, C. and Chitty, C. (1996). *Thirty Years On: Is Comprehensive Education Alive and Well or Struggling to Survive?* London: David Fulton.

Bibby, Martin (Ed) (1977) Code of Ethics. *In Ethics and Educational Research*. Victoria: Australian Association for Research in Education.

Blair, T. (1996) Speech. Ruskin College. Cambridge. December 16.

Bolam, R. (1997) Management Development for Headteachers. *Educational Management and Administration*. 25(3), 265-283

Bottery, M. (1999) .Global Forces and Educational Institutions. *Educational Management and Administration*. 27(3), 299-312

Boyd, W.L. (2000) The "R's of School Reform" and the Politics of Reforming or Replacing Public Schools. *The Journal of Educational Change*. 1(3), 225-252.

Burns, Robert B. (1994) *Introduction to Research Methods*. Melbourne: Longman.

Callaghan, James (1987) *Time and Chance*. London: Collins.

Caldwell, B. and Spinks, J. (1988) *The Self-managing School*. Lewes: Falmer Press.

Caldwell, B. and Spinks, J. (1992) *Leading the Self-managing School*. Lewes: Falmer Press.

Clegg, D. and Billington, S. (1994) *Making the Most of An Inspection (Secondary)*.

London: The Falmer Press.

Creese, M. and Earley, P. (1999) *Improving Schools and Governing Bodies: Making a Difference*. London: Routledge

Crowson, R., Boyd, W.L., and Mawhinney, H. (Eds) (1996) *The Politics of Education and the new Institutionalism*. London: The Falmer Press.

Crowther, F. and Gibson I. (1990) Research as Problem Discovery: Discovering Self-As-Researcher Through Naturalistic Inquiry in Macpherson, R.J.S. and Weeks, J.(Eds) *Pathways to Knowledge in Educational Administration*. Tasmania: ACEA (39-47)

Curtis, P. (2002) Teachers 'over-preparing' to meet unclear demands. Education Guardian. May. <http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,5500,708921,00.html>
(Accessed 9.8.02)

Davies, N. (1999). Crisis in Education. Education Guardian. September
(<http://education.guardian.co.uk/specialreports/educationcrisis/story/0,5500,84111,00.ht>).
(Accessed on 30.3.05)

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds) (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*.

Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Department for Education and Science (DES) (1985) *Better Schools*. London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Science (DES) (1988) *The Education Reform Act*. London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Science (DES) (1991) *The Parents' Charter*. London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Science (DfES) (1992) *School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document*. London: HMSO.

Department for Education (DFE) (1966) *Judging the Quality of Teachers*. London: HMSO.

Department for Education (DFE) (1992) *Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools*. London: HMSO.

Department for Education (DFE) (1994) *School Governors: A Guide to the Law*. London: HMSO

Department of Education (1994) *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*. Washington, D.C.:

U.S. Department of Education.

Drucker, P.F. (1989) *The New Realities*. London: Mandarin

Duignan, P.A. and Macpherson, R.J.S. (Eds.) (1992) *Educative Leadership: A Practical Theory for New Administrators and Managers*. London: The Falmer Press.

Dunleavy, P. and O'Leary, B. (1987) *Theories of State: the politics of a liberal democracy*.

London: Macmillan

Earley (Ed.) (1998) *School Improvement after Inspection? School and LEA Responses*.

London. Paul Chapman Publishing.

Education and Employment Committee, Fourth Report (1999) *The Work of Ofsted:*

Volume 1. London: The Stationery Office

Education Act (1986) HMSO: London

Education Act (1993) HMSO. London

Education Reform Act (1988) London: HMSO

Education (Schools) Act (1992). London: HMSO

Education Review Office of New Zealand www.ero.govt.nz (accessed on 2.1.05)

Education Review Office (2000) *The Role of the Education Review Office in New Zealand Education*. www.ero.govt.nz (accessed on 30.7.03)

Elliott, J. (1979) *School Accountability: Social Control and Dialogue*. Cambridge. Cambridge Institute of Education.

Eraut, M. (1977) Perspectives on Defining "The Learning Society" *Journal of Educational Policy*. 12(6) 551-8

Evers, C and Lakomski, G. (1991) *Knowing Educational Administration*. Oxford: Pergamon

Falade, O. (2001). The Impact of Educational Reform on School Administrators. Unpublished Master of Arts assignment. University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Ferguson, N., Earley, P., Fidler, B. and Ouston, J. (2000) *Improving Schools and Inspection*. London: Paul Chapman

Fiedler, F. (1967) *A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness*. New York: McGraw-Hill

Fink, D., (1999) Deadwood Didn't Kill Itself: A Pathology of Failing Schools in *Educational Management and Administration*. 27(2)131-141

Fullan, M. (1993) *Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform*. London: The Falmer Press.

Fullan, M. (2001) *The New Meaning of Educational Change* (3rd Edition). London: Routledge Falmer.

Fullan, M. (2000) The Role of the Head in School Improvement. Background Paper for the National College of School Leadership.

http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageid=ev_auth_fullan (Accessed on 15.8.03)

Fullan, M. (2003) *Change Forces with a Vengeance*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Gardiner, J. and Hoare, S. (1996, March 15) Heads Protest Over 'Bully Inspector. Times Educational Supplement. The Times. (14)

Glatter, R. From Struggling to Juggling Towards a Redefinition of Educational Leadership and Management. *Educational Management and Administration*. 27(3) 253-266

Goldstein, H. and Myers, K. (1997) School Effectiveness Research: a bandwagon, a hijack or a journey towards enlightenment? Paper presentation at the British Educational Research Association Conference. September.

Goldstein, H. and Mortimore, P. (1999) *The Role of OFSTED in Educational Research*. London: The Education and Employment Committee of the House of Commons, HMSO.

Gray, J., and Wilcox, B., (1995) *Good School. Bad School: Evaluating Performance and Encouraging Improvement*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Greenfield T. and Ribbins P. (1993) *Greenfield on Educational Administration*. London: Routledge..

Gronn, Peter (1996) From Transactions to Transformations. *Educational Management and Administration*. 24(1) 7-30

Guba, E.G., and Lincoln, Y.S. (1981) *Effective Evaluation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Hargreaves, D. (1984) *Improving Secondary Schools*. London: Inner London Education Authority.

Hargreaves, D. (1990) Making Schools More Effective: The Challenge to Policy, Practice and Research. *Scottish Educational Review*. 22(1) 5-14.

Hargreaves, D. (2001) A New Theory of School Effectiveness and Improvement. *British Educational Research Journal*. 27(4) 487-503

Harris, A. and Bennett, N. (Eds) (2001) *School Effectiveness and School Improvement: Alternative Perspectives*. London: Continuum.

Harris, A. (2002) Distributed Leadership in Schools: Leading or Misleading? Paper presentation at the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society conference. Milton Keynes. October

Helmstadter, G.C.(1970) *Research Concepts in Human Behaviour*.. East Norwalk, Conn: Appleton-Century-Crofts

HMI (1988) *Review of Secondary Schools: an Appraisal by HMI, 1982-1986*. London: HMSO

HMI (1995) Improving Schools Survey.

(<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/otherresources/publications/improving/school/survey/>)

(Accessed on 9.8.02)

Hoaglin, D.C.(1982) *Data for Decisions*. Cambridge, Mass: ABT.

Hodgkinson, Christopher (1983) *The Philosophy of Leadership*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Hodgkinson, Christopher (1991). *Educational Leadership: the Moral Art*. New York: State University

Hodgkinson, C. (1996) *Administrative Philosophy: values and motivations in administrative life*. Oxford: Pergamon/Elsevier Science.

Hodgkinson, C. (1997) The Triumph of the Will: An Exploration of Certain Fundamental Problematics in Administrative Philosophy. *Educational Management and Administration*. 25(5) 381-94.

Hopkins, D. (1996) Towards a Theory for School Improvement in Gray, J., Reynolds, D., Fitz-Gibbon, C., and Jesson, D. (eds) *Merging Traditions: the Future of Research on School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. London: Cassell.

Hopkins, D., Harris, A., Watling, R. and Beresford, J. (1999) From Inspection to School Improvement? Evaluating the Accelerated Inspection Programme in Waltham Forest. *British Educational Research Association Journal*. 25(5) 679-690.

Hopkins, D. and Reynolds, D. (2001) The Past, Present and Future of School Improvement: towards the Third Age. *British Educational Research Journal*.27(4) 459-475.

HMIE Scottish Executive (2001) Schools Inspectorate.
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie/ourwork.htm> (Accessed 10.8.03)

Janesick, Valerie (1994) The Dance of Qualitative Research Design. *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Jeffrey, B. And Woods, P. (1995) Reconstructions of Reality: Schools Under Inspection. Paper presented at the ECER Conference. University of Bath. September

Jenkins, Simon (1995) *Accountable To None: the Tory Nationalization of Britain*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Kelly, A.V. (1995) *Education and Democracy: Principles and Practice*. London: Paul Chapman

Kogan, Maurice (1986) *Education Accountability: an Analytic Overview*. London: Hutchinson.

Kogan, Maurice (1996) Monitoring, Control and Governance of School Systems. *Evaluating and Reforming Education Systems* (29-33). Paris: OECD.

Kogan, Maurice and Maden, Margaret (1999a) *The Ofsted System of School Inspection: An Independent Evaluation*. The Centre for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Practice. Brunel University.

Kogan, Maurice and Maden, Margaret (1999b) *The Ofsted System of School Inspection: An Independent Evaluation, Key Findings*. The Centre for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Practice. Brunel University.

Lakomski, Gabriele (1995) Leadership and Learning. *Leading and Managing* 1(3) 211-225

Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D. and Mascal, B. (1999) *The New Structure of School Improvement*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Leithwood, K., Steinbach, R., and Jantzi, D. (2000) Identifying and Explaining the Consequences for Schools of External Accountability Initiatives. Paper presentation American Educational Research Association. New Orleans. April

Macbeath, J. (1999) *Schools Must Speak for Themselves: The Case for School Evaluation*. London: Routledge

Macbeath, J. and Sammons, P. (1998) Raising Standards – Setting Standards: the Improving School Effectiveness Project. Quality in Education Centre, University of Strathclyde. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library/documents-w/hmi3-01.htm>
(Accessed 30 July 2003)

Macpherson, R.J.S., (Ed) (1987) *Ways and Meanings of Educational Administration*. Armidale: University of New South Wales.

Macpherson, R.J.S., (1996) *Educative Accountability: Theory, Practice and Research in Educational Administration*. Oxford: Pergamon

Macpherson, R.J.S. and Weeks, J., (1990) *Pathways to Knowledge in Educational Administration: methodologies and research in progress in Australia*. Armidale: ACEA

Macpherson, R.J.S., Cibulka, J., Monk, D. and Wong, K., (Eds.) (1998) *The Politics of Accountability: Education and International Perspectives*. London. The Falmer Press.

Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. (1995) *Designing Qualitative Research, 2nd edition*. London: Sage.

McConnell, J. (2000) Schools Inspectorate to Undergo Immediate Change. McConnell Announces Reform of HMI. Press Release, November 23rd 2000. Scottish Executive.
www.scotland.gov.uk

McCloud, W. (Ed.) (1995) *The New Collins Concise Dictionary of the English Language*. London: Guild Publishing.

McCloud, W. (Ed.) (1995) *The New Collins Thesaurus*. London: Guild Publishing.

Merriam, Sharan (1988) *Case Study research in Education: A Qualitative Approach*. California: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, Sharan (1995) What Can You Tell From An N of 1?: Issues of Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*. Vol. 4. 51-60

Morgan, Gareth (1980) Paradigms, Metaphors, and Puzzle Solving in Organisational Theory. *Administrative Science Quarterly*. 25(4) 605-622

Mortimore, P., Sammons, P., Stoll, L., Lewis, D. and Ecob, R. (1988) *School Matters: the Junior Years*. Wells: Open Books.

Mortimore, P. in Reynolds, D. and Cuttance, P.(Eds) (1992) *School Effectiveness: Research, Policy and Practice*. London: Cassell.

Mortimore, P. (1999), BERA Inaugural Presidential Address. University of Sussex. Brighton. (http://www.ioe.ac.uk/directorate/bera_speech.htm) (Accessed on 10.8.03)

Murphy, J and Adams, J. (1998). Reforming America's Schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*. 36 (5) 426-444

National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) *A Nation at Risk: Imperative for Reform*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.

National Academy of Education (1996) Title 1 Legislation.
www.ed.gov/pubs/NatAssess/sec2.html (Accessed on 15.8.03)

New South Wales Department of Education and Training (1998) School Accountability and Improvement in New South Wales Public Schools. www.det.nsw.edu.au (Accessed on 8.8.03)

Nias, J. (1989) *Primary Teachers Talking*. London: Routledge

Nuttall, D., Goldstein, H., Prosser, R. and Rasbach, J. (1989) Differential School Effectiveness. *International Journal of Educational Research*. 13(7) 769-76.

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (1993) *Handbook for the Inspection of Schools*. London: HMSO.

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (1995a) *The Handbook: Guidance on the Inspection of Secondary Schools*. London: HMSO.

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (1995b) *The Handbook: Guidance on the Inspection of Nursery and Primary Schools*. London: HMSO.

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (1996) *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector for Schools*. London. HMSO

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (1997) *Framework and Guidance for Inspections*. London: HMSO.

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (1998) *School Evaluation Matters: What is School Evaluation?* London: HMSO.

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (1999) *The Annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools 1997/98*. London: The Stationery Office.

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (2000) *The Annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools 1998/99*. London: The Stationery Office.

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (2001) *The Annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools 1999/2000*. London: The Stationery Office.

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (2001a) *Framework for Inspection*. London: OFSTED Publications.

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (2001b) *Action Planning for School Improvement*. London: OFSTED Publications.

Ouston, J. Earley, P. and Fidler, B. (Eds) (1996) *OFSTED Inspections: the Early Experience*. London: David Fulton.

Punch, Maurice (1994) Politics and Ethics in Qualitative Research in *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage

Reynolds, D. and Cuttance, P. (Eds.) (1992) *School Effectiveness: Research, Policy and Practice*. New York: Cassell.

Reynolds, D. (2003) So Near But Yet So Far. Times Educational Supplement 20.6. 03
<http://www.TES.newsandresources> (Accessed on 4.8.03)

Rutter, M., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P. and Ouston, J., (1979) *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Schoolchildren*. Shepton Mallett: Open Books

Sammons, P. Hillman, J. and Mortimore, P.(1995) *Key Characteristics of Effective Schools: A review of school effectiveness research*. London: HMSO.

Scribner, J. and Layton, D. (1995) *The Study of Educational Politics*. London: The Falmer Press.

Scruton, R. (1983) *A Dictionary of Political Thought*. London: Pan Books

Select Committee on Education and Employment, (1999) (Fifth Report)
<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk> (Accessed on 30.8.03)

Select Committee on Education and Skills, (2001) (Sixth Report)
<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk> (Accessed on 30.8.03)

Senge, Peter M. (1996) *Leading Learning Organisations* in Hesselbein, F. Goldsmith, M. and Beckhard, R. Drucker, P. *Foundation Future: The Leader of the Future*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass..

Sergiovanni, Thomas J. and Carver, Fred D. (1980) *The New School Executive: A theory of Administration, 2nd Edition*. New York: Harper and Rowe.

Shaw, I., Newton, D., Aitken, M and Darnell, R. (2003) Do Ofsted Inspections of Secondary Schools Make a Difference to GCSE Results? *British Educational Research Journal*. 29(1) 63-77. Carfax

Simey, M. (1995) *Government by Consent: The Principles and Practice of Accountability in Local Government*. London: Bedford Square Press.

Smith, D. and Tomlinson, S. (1989) *The School Effect: a Study of Multi-racial Comprehensives*. London: Policy Studies Institute.

Stake, R.E. Case Study Methodology: An Epistemological Advocacy in W.W.Walsh (ed) *Case Study Methodology in Educational Evaluation. Proceedings of the 1981 Minnesota Evaluation Conference*. Minneapolis: Minneapolis Research and Evaluation centre..

Starratt, R.J. (1996) *Transforming Educational Administration: Meaning, Community and Excellence*. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies.

Stott, Kenneth and Walker, Allan (1992) *Making Management Work*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Stoll, L. and Fink, D. (1996) *Changing Our Schools*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Tabberer, R. (1995) *Parents' Perceptions of OFSTED's Work*. Slough: NFER.

Taskforce to Review Education Administration (1988). *Administering for excellence: effective administration in education*. (Picot Report). Wellington, New Zealand. Government Printer.

Thomas, S., Sammons, P., Mortimore, P., and Smees, R. (1997) Differential Secondary School Effectiveness: comparing the performance of different pupil groups. *British Educational Research Journal*. 23(4), 451-469

Thrupp, Martin (1998) Exploring the Politics of Blame: school inspection and its contestation in New Zealand and England. *Comparative Education*. 34(2), 195-208

Tomlinson, M. (2001) Ofsted chief promises teachers less hostile regime. EducationGuardian.co.uk 12 April

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,5500,484841,00.html> (Accessed on 10.8.03)

Tooley, J. (1998) *Educational Research: an OFSTED Critique*. London: OFSTED Publications.

Vann, B. (1994) A Personal Account of School Improvement in an Era of Public Accountability. Unpublished Master of Education thesis, University of Leicester, Leicester, England.

Vann, B. (1995 a) Educative Accountability Policies for Locally Managed Schools with Special Reference to the Professional Development of Leaders. Paper Presentation for the ECER Conference. Bath, England. September

Vann, B. (1995b) The Accountability and Assessment of Schools in England and Wales: Current Issues for Practitioners. *Leading and Managing*. 1(3), 180-192.

Vann, B and West-Burnham, J. (1995) Talking Heads to Thinking Heads. Paper presentation BEMAS Conference. Oxford. September.

Vann, B. (2000) A Case of Mistaken Identity? Re-inspection of a Successful School.

Paper presentation for American Educational Research Association conference. New Orleans. April.

Vidich A.J. and Lyman S.M (1994) Qualitative Methods in Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S.

(Eds) (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Walter, James (1996) *Tunnel Vision: The Failure of Political Imagination*. Australia: Allen and Unwin.

Webb, R. et al (1998) External Inspection or School Self-evaluation? A Comparative

Analysis of Policy and Practice in Primary Schools in England and Finland. *British Educational Research Journal*, 24(5), 539-556

Whitty, G., Power, S., Halpin, D., (1998) *Devolution and Choice in Education: the School, the State and the Market*. Victoria: Acer Press.

Whitty, G. (2000) Education Reform and Education Politics in England: Sociological

Analysis. Paper presentation at a seminar, 24 October, 'Education at the Crossroads:

Education Reform and Education Politics in Japan and England.'. London: Institute of

Education.

Wilcox, B. and Gray, J. (1996) *Inspecting Schools: Holding Schools to Account and Helping Schools to Improve*. Buckingham: Open University Press

Willms, J.D. (1992) *Monitoring School Performance: A guide for educators*. London: The Falmer Press.

Willower, D. (1994) *Educational Administration: Inquiry, Values, Practice*. Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Technomatic..

Wilson, S. (1979) Explorations of the Usefulness of Case Study Evaluations in *Evaluation Quarterly*. Vol. 3. 446-459

Woodhead, C. (1999a) Address to the Cornish Branch of the National Association of Headteachers. Personal note. Bodmin. June.

Woodhead, C. (1999b) Education Guardian. Woodhead bites back.

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/specialreports/educationincrisis/story> (Accessed on 18.9.99).

Woodward, W. (2001) Education Guardian. Ofsted Chief promises teachers less hostile regime. <http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story> (Accessed on 12.4.01).

Wright, N., (2001) Leadership, 'Bastard Leadership' and Managerialism: confronting Twin Paradoxes in the Blair Education Project. *Educational Management and Administration*. 29 (3), 275-290.

Young, Robert (1977). The ethical-political situation of Australian Educational Research: A critical-pragmatist account in Ethics in Bibby, Martin (Ed) (1977) *Code of Ethics in Ethics and Educational Research*. Victoria: Australian Association for Research in Education.

Ysseldyke, J., Thurlow, M., Erickson, R., Haigh, J., Moody, M., Trimble, S.& Insko, B. (1997). Reporting school performance in the Maryland and Kentucky accountability systems: What scores mean and how they are used (Maryland-Kentucky Report 2). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes. http://education.umn.edu/NCEO/OnlinePubs/MDKY_2.html

(Accessed on 6.8.01)